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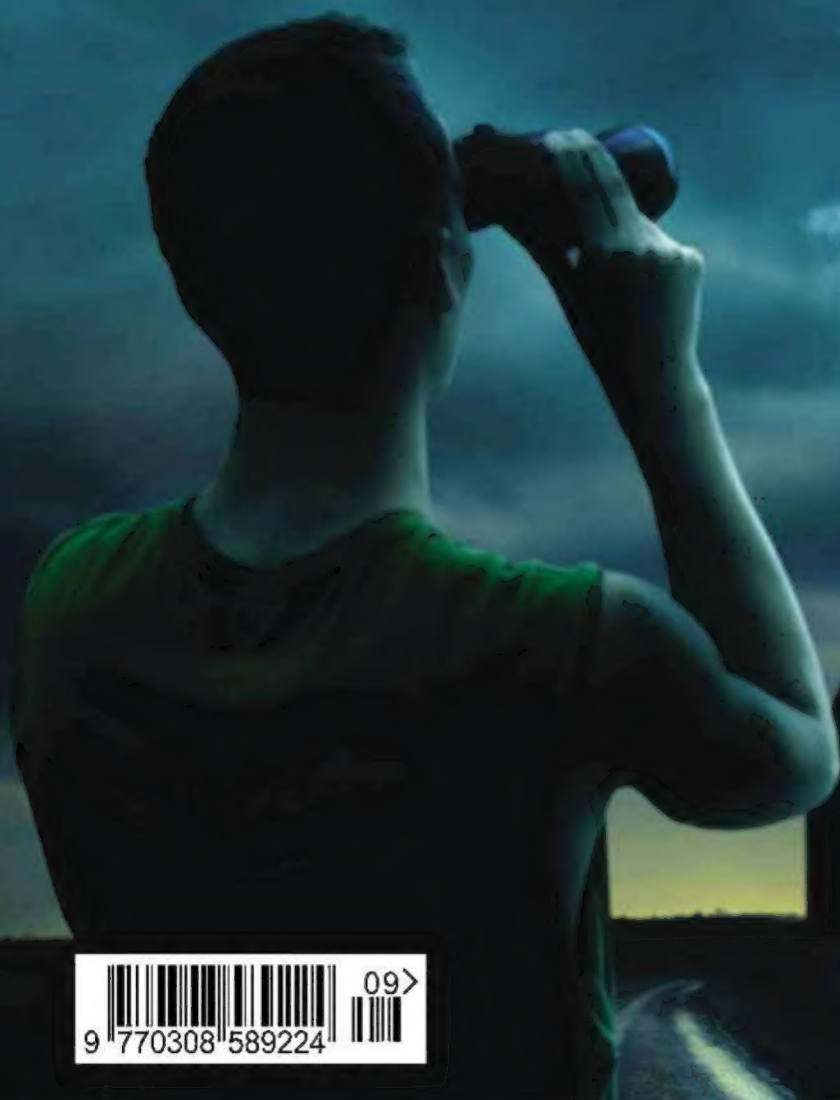
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editorial

Giant jellyfish from outer space!

In May, the UFO Sightings Daily website carried a report of a strange object seen over Toronto. The witness had apparently filmed it a month earlier, on 12 April, and posted the result on YouTube (<http://bit.ly/OCf3Ny>). On the video, a small, whitish object can be seen whizzing across the Toronto sky, moving in front of what appears to be a tall tower block, and then continuing its journey, heading from right to left across the frame, before vanishing behind a building in the foreground; another day, another sky-borne blob.

But what was striking was the witness's

description of the object as a "Jellyfish UFO" – a label that drew responses of recognition from other posters reporting similar sightings.

"This thing came down from above the clouds, slowly descending for about a minute before I began filming," the witness stated. He or she speculated initially that it might have been "some sort of plastic bag" – a view that more sceptical viewers of the video were quick to promote – but brushed aside such a prosaic identification, pointing to "the spheres on the object and 'tentacles' hanging down" as disproving the 'plastic bag' theory (details more visible on a second video of enlarged still images (<http://bit.ly/McWEoZ>)).

The witness's conclusion was that this particular UFO looked and behaved like a "living creature" – a sort of aerial jellyfish, in fact. (The *Toronto Examiner* website went with the excitable headline "Toronto witness reports flying Jellyfish entity with eyeballs").

Ufology isn't short of accounts of aerial objects behaving with what appears to be agency and even intelligence, but the idea that UFOs might be unknown life forms rather than piloted extraterrestrial craft is perhaps less familiar. It's hardly a new notion though, and in fact predates the post-Kenneth Arnold 'flying saucers' of nuts and bolts ufology and popular imagination.

Charles Fort himself speculated at length about unknown aerial, and even interstellar, life forms – "some of our data indicate hosts of rotund and complacent tourists in interplanetary space" – recording sightings of strange luminous bodies in the heavens above Naples in 1845 and Zurich in 1863: "The shapes were of great diversity – or different aspects of similar shapes."

Appendages were seen upon them.

We are told some were star-shaped, with transparent appendages.¹

If Fort's Super-Sargasso Sea was filled not just with cosmic debris and schools of soon-to-fall fish,

but also with what sound rather like jellyfish of the upper regions, then we should remember that a few years earlier, in 1913, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had published a story called "The Horror of the Heights". Here, he too had imagined previously undiscovered realms – "air jungles" in the Earth's upper atmosphere, inhabited by strange aerial creatures. And they weren't friendly. The disappearance of pioneering aviators above 30,000ft (9,000m) was explained by the previously unsuspected presence of aggressive, jellyfish-like creatures.

Trevor James Constable – having read his

Fort and Conan Doyle and inspired by the 'orgone' theories of Wilhelm Reich – took such speculation a stage further. With the post-war saucer age in full swing, Constable argued that many UFO phenomena were best explained by the hypothesis of large atmospheric bio-forms he called "Critters". They weren't generally visible to the naked eye, but Constable managed to photograph these "queer, plasmatic fauna" in a series of high-speed infrared images and eventually shared his findings in the 1975 book *The Cosmic Pulse of Life*, which remains one of the more compellingly *outré* works on the fringes of the ufological canon. Constable's critters weren't quite as vicious as Conan Doyle's,

but they were definitely carnivorous and partial to the occasional cow – thus explaining cases of apparent cattle mutilation.

American researcher Scott Deschaine has returned to the idea of an aerial ocean teeming with unfamiliar life forms in this month's cover feature (pp30-35), and reckons that these critters may have more in common with the denizens of the deep than Fort or Constable imagined even in their wilder flights of imagination.

So, was the Toronto Jellyfish UFO a rare glimpse into an unknown ecology from above the clouds – or just a stray plastic bag?

1 Charles Fort: *Book of the Damned*, JBP, 1999, pp205, 208.



"I request the public stay calm. These are not alien spaceships but huge airborne jellyfish."

DAVID SUTTON
BOB RICKARD
PAUL SIEVEKING

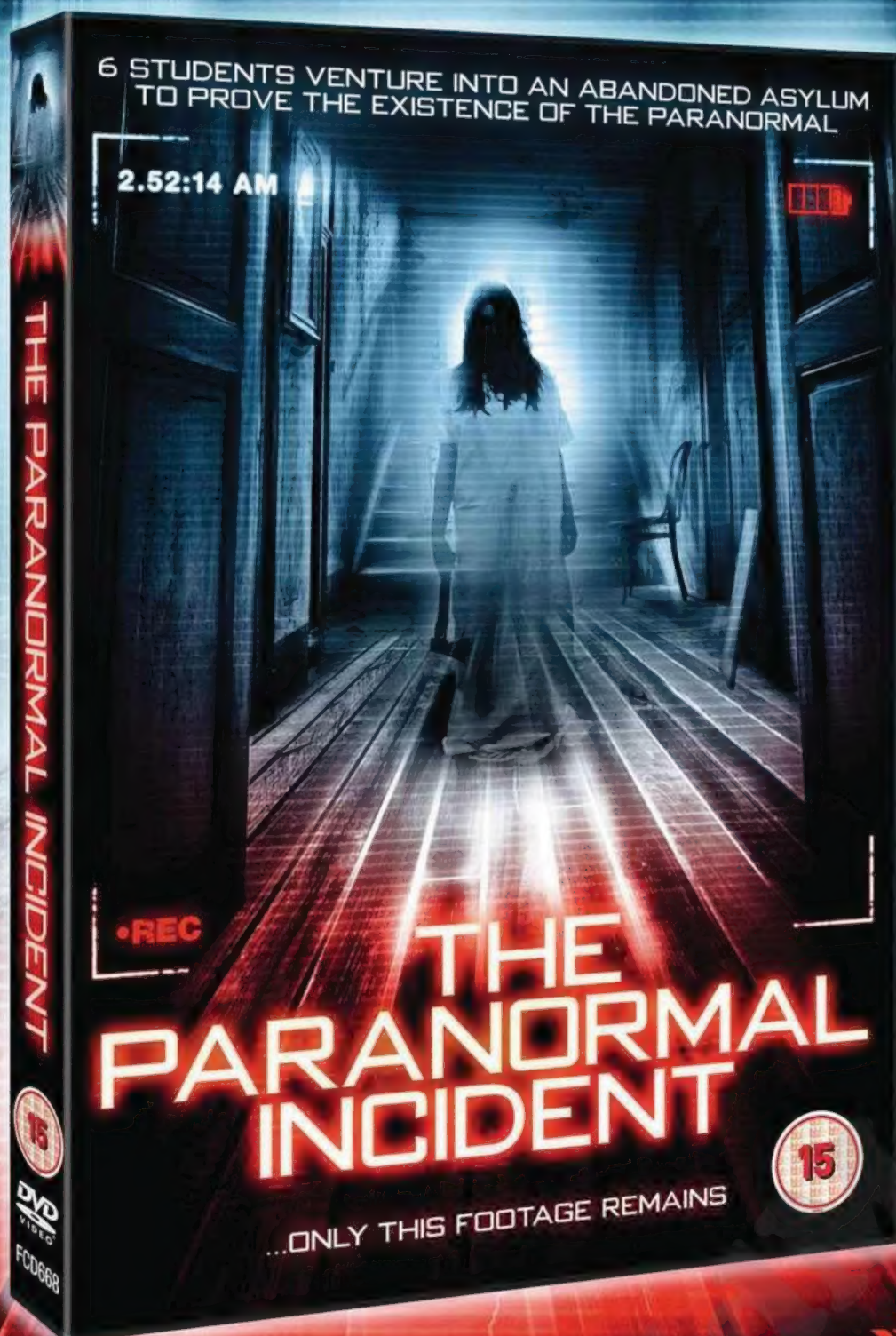
Why fortean?

Everything you always wanted to know about Fortean Times but were too paranoid to ask!

SEE PAGE 78



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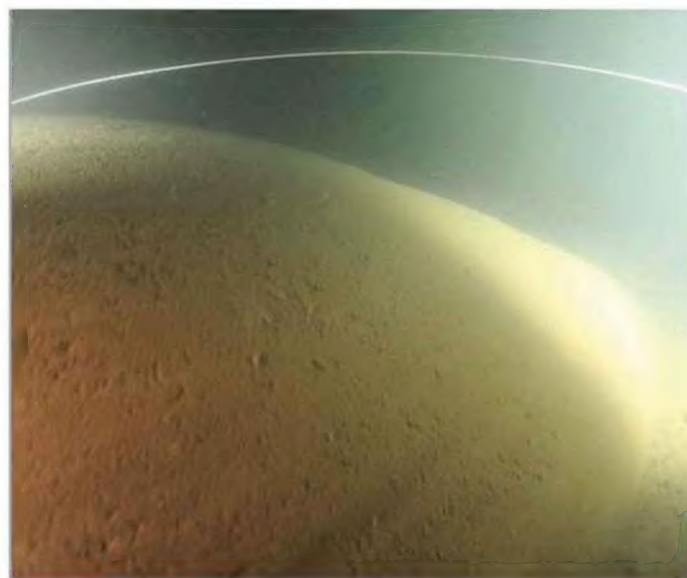
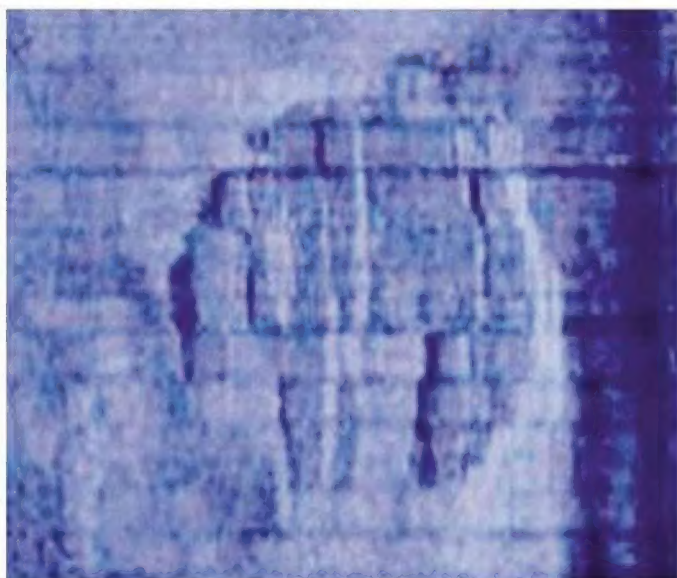


A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

strangedays

Baltic seabed mystery

Object shows strange markings and apparent signs of burning, and causes electrical failures



OCEAN EXPLORER

Divers have now examined the object first noticed on a sonar scan in June 2011 (above left), sitting on the seabed 300ft (90m) down in the Gulf of Bothnia between Sweden and Finland [FT280:18]. It was said to resemble the *Star Wars* spaceship *Millennium Falcon* or to be “some kind of plug to the inner world”. The Ocean X diving team found that it is raised about 10–13ft (3–4m) above the seabed, with a diameter of 60m (197ft). It is concave at the sides, giving it a mushroom shape; the sides are rounded, with “rugged edges” (above right). There also appears to be a 26ft (8m) “pillar” holding the object up. The divers were limited in what they could see by their lighting technology, which gave maximum visibility of a metre (39in). Sonar was used as back-up.

Diver Peter Lindberg said: “It’s

Divers found a trail like a runway or a downhill path

not obviously an alien spacecraft. It’s not made of metal. First we thought it was only stone, but this is something else. It appears to have construction lines and boxes drawn on it. There are also straight edges.” Oddly, there is no silt on the object, as one might expect. At the centre is an “egg-shaped hole leading into it from the top”. Surrounding the hole are rocks looking like “small fireplaces” and covered in something resembling soot. “Since no volcanic activity has ever been

reported in the Baltic Sea, the find becomes even stranger,” said Lindberg.

On the subject of the soot, Lindberg’s colleague, Stefan Høgeborn (or Høgerborn/Høberborn) said: “Normally stones don’t burn. I can’t explain what we saw.” He added that some of the cameras and the satellite phone were affected by the object. “Anything electric out there – and the satellite phone as well – stopped working when we were above the object,” he said. “And then we got away about 200 metres [650ft] it turned on again, and when we got back over the object it didn’t work.” The divers found a 985ft (300m) trail, which they described “as a runway or a downhill path that is flattened at the seabed with the object at the end of it”. There was also a “similar disc-shaped object” about 650ft (200m) away from the first one. A brief video

clip of the dive can be viewed on Gizmodo.

Critics say the only sonar image is riddled with “numerous processing artefacts” and resembles a spaceship only because the divers drew a *Millennium Falcon*-shape outline around it. Jonathon Hill of the Mars Space Flight Facility at Arizona State University suggests it’s all a scam. “Lindberg is already making plans to take ‘wealthy tourists’ down in his submarine to view the object,” he said. “If he had used a rock hammer to break off a small piece of the object, a geologist could have determined whether it was a pillow basalt [a natural rock formation] in a few minutes. But if it turned out to be a pillow basalt... Lindberg wouldn’t have much of a business plan, would he?” *D.M.*, 18+27 June; *Fox News*, 18 June; *NY Daily News*, 19 June; *MSN*, 29 June 2012.



THROWING STONES
Zimbabwe goblins are accused of attacking family
PAGE 8



CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST
People-eating outbreak goes on all around the world
PAGE 10



DJINN HUNTERS
Saudi searches for spirits and other ghostly encounters
PAGE 16

Vampire kit auction

Found in uncle's cellar, equipment is claimed to be 19th-century

A "vampire-slaying kit" sold at auction for £7,500 to the Royal Armouries Museum on 22 June. It had belonged to a Yorkshire woman who found it in the cellar of her late uncle in Leeds, along with two other similar kits. The mahogany box contains an ornate pistol, bullet-mould, bottle of 'holy water', rosary beads, crucifix, four wooden stakes, mallet, 'holy earth', garlic, the Book of Common Prayer and a hand-written biblical verse (Luke 19:27).

Nigel Smith, from Tennants Auctioneers, of Leyburn, North Yorkshire, said it was probably made in the late 19th century; but Jonathan Ferguson, Curator of Firearms at the Royal Armouries Museum, maintains that there is no firm evidence that any of the kits predate 1986 [see his article FT288:32-39].

Mr Ferguson believes this kit is the only one in a UK museum. "As a piece of 'firearms curiosa', it will form part of the Armouries' permanent collection, and will be on display at our Leeds museum soon," he told *Fortean Times*. "Though not attributed to the good 'Professor Blomberg', it is of the same quality as some of the more noteworthy pieces out there. Following the lead of the Mercer Museum, we hope to subject the kit to some non-invasive scientific analysis. I welcome any leads that readers may have; I am particularly interested in references for - or even anecdotal sightings of - vampire kits pre-1986." *BBC News*, 8 June; *Northern Echo*, *msn.com*, 22 June 2012.



TENNANTS AUCTIONEERS

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

**Chickens
kill cattle**

Sunday World (Ireland), 20 May 2007.

**Miracle
twins kill
mother's
tumour**

(Dublin) Herald, 5 Feb 2008.

**Wheelchair-bound
woman steals elf**

Irish Independent, 15 Dec 2011.

**Pear delivers
health lesson**

Canberra Chronicle, 9 Nov 2011.

**'Elusive' brainless fish
discovered in Scotland**

D.Telegraph, 29 Dec 2011.

**CAMEL
SWALLOWS
WOMAN
IN PEDICURE
MISHAP**

Metro, via Irish Independent, 24 Dec 2011.

**GHOULS
TAKE A
CHAIN
SAW TO
WHALE
CORPSE**

Lynn News (Norfolk), 30 Dec 2011.



DUCK DRIVE

Here's a scene largely vanished from European cities – though last October Spanish farmers drove 5,000 sheep through Madrid in defence of ancient migration and droving rights (as previously seen in **FT143:11**). These ducks are waddling through the booming Chinese coastal city of Taizhou, about 190 miles (306km) south of Shanghai. Farmer Hong Minshun, 70, (who can be seen towards the top of the picture), regularly drives his 5,000 ducks about a mile from his farm to a feeding pond. He tries to avoid busy periods, but traffic nonetheless gets caught up in the parade. Hong, armed with just a very long stick and aided by a few assistants, has managed to make the journey without losing a single duck in the past six months. *D.Telegraph*, 31 Oct 2011; *Metro*, *D. Mail*, 19 June 2012.

PHOTO: REUTERS / CHINA DAILY INFORMATION CORPS



SIDELINES...

CISTERN OF MERCY

Sanal Edamaruku, President of the Indian Rationalist Organisation, announced last March that "holy water" from a "weeping" crucifix, collected by thousands of pilgrims at the Church of Our Lady of Velankanni in Andheri, near Mumbai, came by capillary action from a drain near a lavatory, and could be a health hazard. When he refused to apologise, a group of Catholics filed a charge against him under the 1860 blasphemy law. If found guilty, he could be jailed for three years. *boingboing.net*, 13 April; *nirmukta.net*, 14 April; *Sun*, 17 May 2012.

SUNK BEFORE

An eagle-eyed observer of the 1984 film *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* noticed that the ship which blew up and sank at the beginning was called *Concordia* – the same name as the vessel that sank off the Italian coast on 13 January 2012. (Queensland) *Sunday Mail*, 15 April 2012.

ODDS ON ALIEN LIFE

A survey of the 160 billion (or so) red dwarf stars in the Milky Way has shown that our galaxy may contain billions of planets in the "habitable zone", in which liquid surface water can exist, making life (as we know it) possible. There are at least 100 "super-Earths" – planets with masses between one and 10 times that of Earth – at distances of fewer than 30 light years, or about 180 trillion miles, from the Sun. *D.Telegraph*, 29 Mar 2012.



MARTIN ROSS

Plagued by goblins

Paranormal attack in Zimbabwe, dog-pig 'hybrid' in Namibia

STONE-THROWING

Throughout April and May, the Sithole family in Zimbabwe suffered a paranormal persecution at their Chisumbanje homestead in Chipinge South. They were pelted with stones by unseen assailants thought to be goblins, and soil was repeatedly tossed into their cooking pots as they were preparing food. Matters came to a head around 20 May when three huts and a house at the homestead were burnt to the ground, after Taso Sithole, 16, had stepped inside and come out again. Efforts to douse the fires were rendered futile as the well had mysteriously run dry, only to fill up to the brim after the huts had been razed.

"We consulted different traditional healers for possible solutions," said Sarah Muyambo, 52. "On more than one occasion, we were told that my son Enoch was responsible. They said he laid his hands on some money-making magical charms and things are now backfiring. When he returned from Bindura we went to one traditional healer with him so that he could hear it from the horse's mouth, but he vehemently denied the accusations."

Following the fires, the family were obliged to sleep in the open with the few belongings they had managed to salvage, but the persecution continued. When Mrs Muyambo was interviewed, she said there had been three fusillades of stones that very day. "Sometimes, some big objects like pots mysteriously rise from the ground coming in your direction and you just need to be alert all the time," she said. Various Christian groups had visited the homestead and prayed, but nothing had improved.



Snake-like creatures in sunglasses had been seen

In a separate interview, Enoch, 29, professed ignorance of what had caused his family's misfortunes. "I have never consulted any traditional healers with the aim of acquiring riches," he said. "My hands are clean." Neighbours confirmed that strange things were taking place at the Sithole homestead. Some claimed that "snake-like creatures wearing sunglasses, a suit and a pair of shoes" had been seen at the homestead. *zimdiaspora.com*, 23 May 2012.

DOG-HEADED PIG MONSTER

Residents in northern Namibia, southwest Africa, have reported

being terrorised by a bizarre dog-pig hybrid creature. The animal is said to be mostly white and unlike anything the villagers have ever seen, with a doglike head and the broad, round, nearly hairless back and shoulders of a giant pig. The beast was spotted chasing and attacking dogs, goats and other domestic animals in this arid region not far from the Kalahari Desert.

Some locals armed themselves and took to travelling in groups. "This is an alien animal that the people have not seen before," said regional councillor Andreas Mundjindi. "We don't have a forest here, only bushes. So, this must be black magic at play." Some locals traced the beast to one old man rumoured to be a warlock or witch doctor, suggesting it was his pet – or what witch-hunters would once have called a "familiar".

Several other monsters have been reported in rural areas of Namibia over the years; in July 2009, for instance, unknown creatures reportedly sucked the blood out of livestock, including nearly two dozen goats. Though no one saw the monsters, they were said to have left footprints similar to those of a dog, but much larger. Police followed the footprints, but they mysteriously stopped in an open field, as if the creature suddenly took flight or vanished. At that time, locals were also convinced that the strange beast was the product of black magic – going so far as to accuse an old man and his sister of conjuring up the creature. It's not clear whether locals believe that the current dog-headed, pig-bodied animal is the same mystery creature that terrorised the region three years ago. *LiveScience.com*, 28 Feb 2012.

There's a coincidence!

Polaroid surprise, plus long-lost siblings amazingly close

● On 24 May, Addison Logan, 13, drove around Wichita, Kansas with his grandmother, Lois Logan, visiting garage sales. At the third one, he bought an old Polaroid camera for a dollar. Back at his grandmother's house, he got on the Internet for instructions to use it. When he opened it, he saw it still had a photo inside. He showed the photo to his grandmother; she didn't know that it had come from the Polaroid camera, and recognised her son, the boy's uncle Scott, who'd died 23 years earlier. She thought it was a family photo, but didn't recall seeing it before. In the photo, Scott is sitting on a sofa with a high school girlfriend, Susan. Lois guessed it was taken in 1978 or 1979, about 10 years before his death. When Addison told her it came from the garage sale camera, she thought he was kidding. Later, the family visited the people who organised the garage sale, who were unknown to them. The man who sold Addison the camera said he thought he had bought it at another garage sale, but couldn't recall where.

Susan Ely, the woman in the photo, had married and moved away long ago. Scott was a 28-year-old single father when he died in 1989. He had a job selling vacuum cleaners door-to-door, and fell asleep at the wheel while driving. His car left the road and rolled over, breaking his neck. Seven years before that, his brother Brian had also died in a car that rolled over, also from a broken neck. Their surviving brothers, Blake and Jeff, and the rest of the family considered the discovery of the photo miraculous, or a sign from Scott beyond the grave. *Wichita (KS) Eagle*, 25 May; *theoddsmustbecrazy.com*, 27 May 2012.

● Steven Goosney (29) and Tommy Larkin (30) born a year and a half apart, were both adopted. Both knew they had a brother and spent years looking for each other. Larkin finally



ABOVE: The Polaroid camera and the 'miraculous' photo of Addison Logan's uncle.

She recognised her son, the boy's uncle, who had died 23 years before

located his brother through an adoption agency in March 2010. Little did they know they had spent seven months living almost directly across the street from each other in Corner Brook, western Newfoundland. In fact, they had been on the same street for more than two years – Larkin had changed residences seven months earlier. It was one of the easiest meetings to arrange in adoption history – Larkin just had to look out of his living room window, wait for Goosney to come home, make the call and invite him over. Despite living so close to each other, the brothers didn't recall seeing or speaking to each other. However, there has been no shortage of conversation since they found each other. "It is the bloodline," said Goosney. "We

both have families but this is as close as it gets. The connection we have, I think will carry through for the rest of our lives." *Victoria (BC) Times Colonist*, 6 April 2010.

● Alison Slavin (41) and Sam Davies (43) live a mile apart in Bristol. They met in 1993 through a mutual friend, and soon became best friends. They used to go to karaoke twice a week and Slavin was a bridesmaid at Davies's wedding. Both are childminders, both have two children, and they share the same taste in clothes and jewellery. Many of their friends asked if they were sisters, as they looked so alike. Slavin knew that she had been adopted at birth. Earlier this year, she traced her birth mother and was astonished to find that her father was called Terry Cox – the same name as her best friend's father. In April, a DNA test confirmed that he was the same man, making them half-sisters. Mr Cox, who now lives in Spain, confirmed the news when contacted through Facebook. "I had always wanted a sister," said Davies, "and what better sister could I have than my best friend?" *Guardian*, *MX News (Sydney)*, 11 May; *Metro*, 12 May 2012.

SIDELINES...

FAKES NAB FAKES

A day after fake monks were arrested drinking and womanising in Beijing to vilify Buddhism, it transpired that the arrests had been made by fake police. The Jiamusi People's Police Academy, which offered three-year courses for £1,900, was exposed in a sting by real police disguised as schoolgirls. Its 23 staff, many retired military personnel, were arrested. Academy president Zhao Qingxin had a building, uniforms, equipment and a forged letter from a real academy. *MX News (Sydney)*, 11 April 2012.

SKEWERED

A politician turned chat show host was jailed for a year after urging viewers to dig up a woman's body and drive a stake through her heart to end a city's "vampire curse". Ghiulten Ghica's family ordered her exhumation after Metin Cerchez claimed her spirit was behind hauntings in Braila, Romania. He even persuaded her brother to take part. *Sunday Mirror*, 15 April 2012.

SPACED OUT

Brain scans of 27 astronauts who had flown long-term missions with NASA revealed a pattern of unexplained deformities in eyeballs, optic nerves and pituitary glands that may jeopardise long-term space missions. The symptoms are similar to those caused by intracranial hypertension, a rare medical condition that occurs when pressure inside the skull rises and presses on the brain and the backs of the eyes. *Guardian*, 13 Mar 2012.

PARROT RETURNS

Shannon Underhill, nine, was talking to friends in her school playground on 26 March when her pet parrot Scarlet – which had never visited the school before – landed on her shoulder. The four-year-old African grey had been missing for two days from its home in Bridgend, South Wales. "I thought Scarlet had gone for ever, but somehow she found me," said Shannon. *Western Mail*, 29 Mar 2012.



SIDELINES...

VERBAL TYRANNY

Schools in New York City have been banned from using the words 'dinosaur', 'birthday', 'dancing', or 'Hallowe'en' in exams because they "could evoke unpleasant emotions in students". *Irish Independent*, 31 Mar 2012.

BUNNY REFUSES TO HOP IT

Police called to tackle a prowler with a "striking face" arrested a 6ft (1.8m) Easter bunny made of rubber left outside a house in Duisber, Germany. "A couple felt harassed by a stalker in front of their window," said an officer. "We took him into custody, but he hasn't said much yet." *Sunday Times*, 15 April 2012.

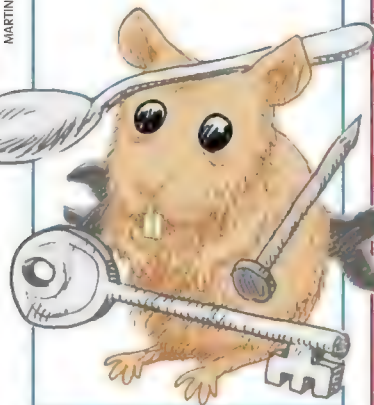
ALTERNATIVE HISTORY

Here's a killer question for Mitt Romney, the Republican politician desperate to avoid talking about the odder details of his Mormon faith: "Mr Romney, could you tell us which states Jesus Christ visited when he arrived in America?" *Damian Thompson in D.Telegraph*, 28 April 2012.

MAGNETISED PET

A hamster became stuck to the metal bars of its cage after eating a Spider-Man magnet. Smurf, the four-month-old pet, had swallowed the foot of the action figure, which had the magnet attached. Owner Kate Meech from Northampton had the magnet removed before transferring Smurf to a plastic cage. *Daily Post*, 12 April 2012.

MARTIN ROSS



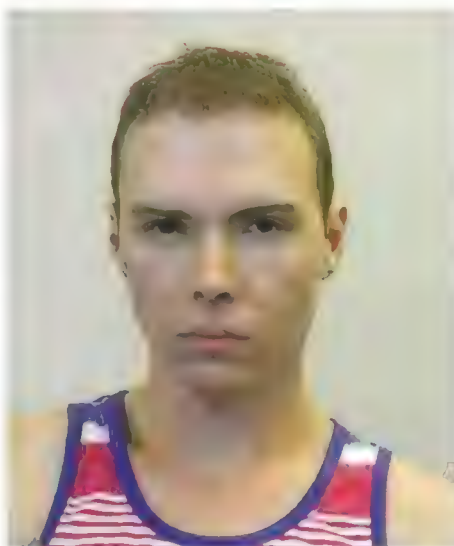
Cannibal rampage

THE CARNAGE CONTINUES, AS REPORTS COME IN OF FURTHER ATTACKS AROUND THE WORLD

Immediately following the cannibal round-up last issue [FT290:26-27], *Fortean Times* received several more reports. There appears to be an alarming spike in people-eating.

● Luka Rocco Magnotta, 29, a male stripper and low-budget bisexual porn actor living in Montreal, has pushed back the frontiers of depravity in Canada. He killed his boyfriend, Chinese student Lin Jun (or Jun Lin, aka Justin Lin), 32, who was naked and tied to a bed, by stabbing him with an ice pick and cutting his throat. He then dismembered and decapitated him (while playing New Order's 'True Faith', used in the soundtrack on the film *American Psycho*), tucked into pieces of his flesh with knife and fork and fed some to a dog, masturbated with the man's body parts and anally penetrated the limbless torso. Not only that, but he videotaped the whole thing, uploaded the 11-minute footage to a gory website on 25 May under the title "1 Lunatic 1 Ice Pick", then started taunting police by sending body parts to Canada's major political parties. On 29 May, a foot arrived at Conservative Party HQ in Ottawa, and a hand was found in a postal sorting office in a parcel addressed to the Liberal Party. In Montreal on the same day, a janitor found the torso in a suitcase in a pile of rubbish behind Magnotta's apartment. On 5 June, Lin Jun's other hand and foot were found in parcels addressed to schools in Vancouver.

Magnotta, aka Vladimir Romanov or 'Angel', was born Eric Newman in Scarborough, near Toronto, in 1982, changing his name to Magnotta in 2006. He had undergone plastic surgery in an attempt to look like James Dean and was already notorious among animal rights activists for posting online gruesome footage of himself torturing and killing kittens. He was once rumoured



LEFT: Luka Rocco Magnotta posted online video footage of his killing, molesting and dismembering his boyfriend.

May, 6 June, 2 July; *Sydney Morning Herald*, CNN, 1+5 June; *Guardian*, 2+9 June; *D.Mail*, 5+7 June; *D.Telegraph*, *D.Express*, 5 June 2012.

● At 2pm on 26 May, Rudy Eugene was shot while eating a man's face in Miami [FT290:27]. Precisely a month later – at 2pm on 26 June – a Chinese bus driver identified as 'Dong', who had been drinking heavily with his friends, tried to gnaw off a woman's face. He rushed onto the road near

a bus station in Ou Hai District in Wenzhou City, Zhejiang province. He then blocked a car, climbed on to the bonnet and banged on the windshield while the female driver, identified as 'Du', screamed inside. After a few minutes, Du tried to flee, but Dong grabbed her and started biting her face as the two fell to the ground. Passers-by failed to pull them apart, but finally police arrived and arrested the "crazed" Dong. Du will need plastic surgery to repair her nose and lips. *Asia One*, 29 June 2012.

● Zhang Yongming, 56, was detained around 12 May in his home village of Nanmen in Yunnan province, southwest China, for the murder of a 19-year-old man in late April and up to 16 other male teenagers who had gone missing from the village in recent years. Zhang, a loner who never talked to his neighbours, had previously served almost 20 years in jail for murder and was known in the village as the "cannibal monster". Residents said they had seen plastic bags hanging from his home, with what appeared to be bones protruding from the top. The police discovered human eyeballs preserved inside wine bottles – "like snake wine", according to the *Hong Kong Standard* – and pieces of what appeared to be human flesh

"It's not cool to the world being a necrophiliac"

to have dated Karla Homolka, who had spent 12 years in jail for her part in the rape and murder of three girls in Ontario, including her own sister. On one blog, Magnotta wrote: "It's not cool to the world being a necrophiliac. It's bloody lonely... I don't see myself as some creepy pervert. I'm just somebody who has feelings, real feelings, for dead men."

After murdering Lin Jun, Magnotta flew to Paris on 26 May and then took a coach to Berlin, where he was caught on 4 June while admiring photos of his crime at a cybercafé on Karl Marx Strasse. (In a block of flats nearby on the same day, a local man beheaded his wife and cut her into pieces in front of their six children before throwing the head from the roof.) A human head was found in a Montreal park on 1 July, but had not been identified as Lin Jun's at the time of going to press. *Toronto Sun*, 29 May + 5 June; *CBC News*, 29 May; *BBC News*, 30+31

REUTERS

hanging up to dry. They feared he had fed human flesh to his three dogs, while selling other parts on the market, calling it "ostrich meat". [AFP] 26 May 2012.

● An unnamed Swedish associate professor at the prestigious Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, who thought his young wife was having an affair, "cut off her lips and ate them", in the words of a source close to the case, quoted by the newspaper *Aftonbladet*. "He doesn't seem to regret anything. He thinks she is the one who has offended him. He didn't want the lips to be able to be sewn back on," said the source, explaining why he had eaten them. The woman's lawyer, Ingela Ekman Hessius, said her client had suffered "very serious injuries. The doctors have not yet said whether they can fix this or not. She is of course not doing well, psychologically or physically." The attacker had several children from his first marriage, which had ended only weeks before he married his current wife, a much younger woman. [AFP] 1 June 2012.

● Alexander Kinyua, 21, a Kenyan student at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland, has been charged with murdering his Ghanaian housemate, Kujoe Bonsofo Agyei-Kodie, 37, and eating his heart and part of his brain. He then hid his victim's head and hands in tins at his family home nearby. His brother Jarrod confronted him when he found the remains, but when Jarrod returned with his father, he "observed that the items were gone", according to the police, who added: "Alex Kinyua was cleaning the container he saw them in." The rest of Agyei-Kodie's body was found in a rubbish bin outside a church. *Baltimore (MD) Sun*, 31 May; *D.Mirror*, 2 June 2012.

● Jiemieng Liu, 79, battered his wife Yuee Zhou, 73, to death on 5 April before chopping off her arm and eating it. The limb was gnawed to the bone and she had several missing fingers, which he is also thought to have eaten. The couple had emigrated from China's Hunan province in 2011 to live with their son in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts. The son returned from work to find his father with blood on his face sitting in a rocking chair next to the mutilated body, chanting: "This is not your mother". He was charged with murder, but was found to be suffering from dementia and died of natural causes in hospital on 5 May. [AP] *Boston (MA) Herald*, 7 April, 6 May; *Sun*, 9 April 2012.

● On 21 July 2011, Adriana Miranda was walking with her sister in downtown Los Angeles, pushing her four-month-old son in a pushchair, when she encountered Natasha Hubbard, a 36-year-old homeless woman. Hubbard reached into the pushchair, unbelted the baby, grabbed him by the leg and swung him overhead before slamming him into a rail. She then tried to break off his arm in order to eat it (something she later confirmed in an interview with the police). When Miranda grabbed her son back, Hubbard

scratched her and tried to fight before running off. Witnesses helped identify her, leading to her arrest. *theblaze.com*, 28 July 2011.

● On 13 April 2012, Tokyo illustrator Mao Sugiyama publicly seasoned and braised his own genitals on a portable gas cart-ridge burner, and then served them up to five eager diners who had each paid £160 for the meal at the Asagaya Loft A event space in Tokyo's Sugiyama Ward. The genitals had been returned to the asexual Sugiyama, frozen and double-wrapped in plastic, following elective genital removal surgery on his 22nd birthday in early April. A crowd of about 70 mostly 20-somethings gathered, five to a table, to listen to a piano recital and panel discussion before the dinner. While only five servings of genitals were available, the other diners were served beef- and crocodile-based dishes, all cooked by Sugiyama himself, dressed as a chef.

Photographs of the braised genitals showed a sliced penis shaft with clearly visible corpora cavernosa and urethra, a sliced testicle with the look and texture of sea urchin sushi, and scrotal skin with about 3mm of pubic hair growth. The dish was garnished with button mushrooms and Italian parsley. Penis and scrotum were said to be hard, rubbery and tasteless, while the testicles were hard on the outside, soft and glutinous in the middle, with a fishy or gamey taste. The city police received many enquiries and complaints about the bizarre banquet, but said they were unable to pursue the matter because there is no law prohibiting cannibalism in Japan. *calorielab.com*, 25 May; *Sun*, 26 May 2012.



LEFT: Jiemieng Liu (front) battered his wife to death, chopped off her arm and ate it. His son found him with the body, chanting: "This is not your mother."

SIDELINES...

FICTION REALISED

Bill Granger, the US columnist and thriller writer who died on 22 April, caused a stir when his first novel prefigured the assassination of Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Queen's cousin, by the Provisional IRA on 27 August 1979. *The November Man* dealt with a terrorist conspiracy to assassinate a relative of the Queen by blowing up a boat on the Irish Sea. It was published only a matter of weeks before Mountbatten's fishing boat, *Shadow V*, was blown up at Mullaghmore, County Sligo. *D.Telegraph*, 2 May 2012.

PURIFYING FLAMES

Two naked men started a house fire as they held a Wicca ritual to "cleanse their souls". Terence Williams, 51, and Aftab Mughal, 21, started the blaze with paper and a wooden broom at the older man's home in Nottingham on 21 October 2011. They pleaded guilty to arson and were each ordered to do 120 hours of unpaid work. *D.Telegraph*, 25 April 2012.

TIME TO RENAME?

A burst water main was left to shoot 100ft (30m) fountain of water into houses just yards away for more than an hour on 9 May before engineers shut it off. The houses were in a street called Running Waters (seriously), in Brentwood, Essex. Running Waters has been the scene of three major water pipe ruptures in the last seven years. *thisistotalessex.co.uk*, 10 May 2012.

PRODIGIOUS EWE

A Welsh mountain ewe was scanned for twins and duly gave birth to two lambs for farmer Arwyn Roberts of Pentre Mawr, Cwmpennaner, Corwen. But two days later, just as the four-year-old animal was about to be turned out with her lambs, she delivered another set of twins. Such an event has allegedly never been recorded before, but there was no doubt about it: two of Mr Roberts's children witnessed all four births. *Daily Post*, 19 April 2012.



SIDELINES...

SIMIAN VENGEANCE

A tribe of monkeys attacked taxis in front of a hotel in Sanya, in the southern Chinese province of Hainan, after a taxi ran over and killed a young monkey. During the attacks, some of the monkeys stood guard over the corpse until the police arrived and removed it. *Morning Star*, 16 April 2012.

SHOPPING HAZARD

During a family trip to a shopping mall in Jeddah, a Saudi man complained that his 13-year-old daughter had started acting "in an abnormal way" after coming close to a Sri Lankan woman. He had the security forces arrest the woman on suspicion of casting a spell. She may face death in a country where convicted sorcerers are beheaded. *[R] Irish Times*, 19 April 2012.

GUINNESS RECORD

A bearded lizard belonging to Nick Vernon from Leicestershire has set a new world longevity record by reaching the age of 14 years and seven months – nearly three times the normal age. Vernon attributes his pet's survival to a daily tippie of Guinness – in fact, the reptile is aptly named Guinness. *Sunday Mercury*, 8 April 2012.

GHOSTS SMOKED OUT

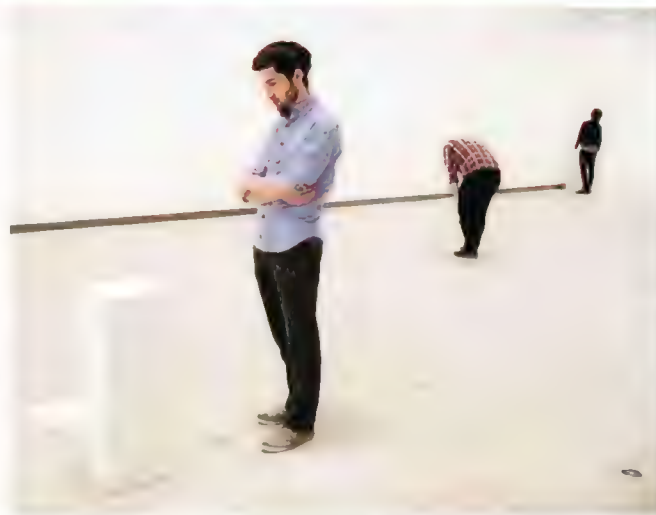
Dope dealer Hitler Jingura, 23, dodged nine months in jail after telling a court: "I used the dagga [cannabis] to scare away spooks." Magistrates in Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe, gave him a suspended sentence with community service. *Sun*, 25 April 2012.



MARTIN ROSS

PLENTY OF NOTHING

PAUL SIEVEKING considers the aesthetics of absence



LEFT: Tom Friedman's *Untitled (A Curse)* (1992).

BELOW: Jeppe Heine's *Invisible Labyrinth* (2005).

The summer exhibition at London's Hayward Gallery, entitled *Invisible: Art about the Unseen 1957–2012*, runs from 12 June to 5 August (£8 admission). It features work by the French artist Yves Klein, who pioneered invisible works in 1958 with his concept of the "architecture of air". Andy Warhol's *Invisible Sculpture* (1985) consists of a plinth on which he had once briefly stepped, one of his many explorations of the nature of celebrity. An exhibit called *1,000 Hours of Staring* is a blank sheet of paper at which Tom Friedman has stared repeatedly over five years. The same artist produced *Untitled (Curse)*, an 11in (28cm) space that had been cursed by a witch.

A series of typed instructions by Yoko Ono encourage viewers to conjure up an art-work in their minds. In Jeppe Heine's *Invisible Labyrinth*, visitors negotiate their way through a maze wearing digital headphones activated by infrared beams. And there's a piece by Teresa Margolles in which she takes water that has been used to wash the bodies of murder victims in Mexico City's morgue and uses it in a humidifier. Visitors walk through a room

just aware of this superfine mist and its relationship to people mainly killed by drug cartels. Probably the wittiest contribution is Maurizio Cattelan's send-up of the whole idea of conceptual art when he reported the theft of an invisible artwork to the police, then exhibited the solemn police report in the gallery.

"This is the best exhibition you'll never see," said Hayward director Ralph Rugoff. "It highlights that art isn't about material objects, it's about setting our imaginations alight, and that's what the artists in this show do in many varied ways." Rugoff curated a similar exhibition in San Francisco in 2005, and the Pompidou Centre in Paris put on a show featuring a procession of empty spaces in 2009. The Gang of Fort recalls the *Exhibition To*

Be Constructed In Your Head – described as "2,500 square feet of nothing" – which was staged for a week in March 2001 at the Custard Factory in Digbeth, Birmingham, by the art group Proto-Mu. There were 60 imaginary exhibits with descriptive labels. "It certainly isn't art," said one visitor. "I don't know what it is, but I don't like it."

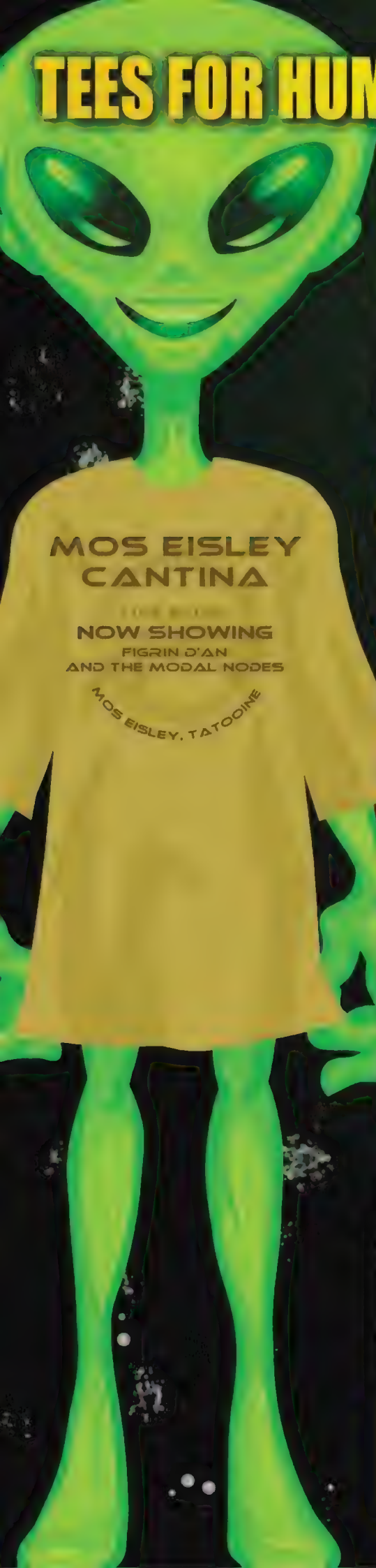
In 2001, Middlesbrough sound technician Jonty Semper issued a double CD of all the available recordings of the two-minute Armistice Day silences at the Cenotaph since 1927. And when Wombles creator Mike Batt released his recording called *One Minute Silence* in 2002, the estate of John Cage accused him of copyright infringement of 4'33", a silent work by the late avant-garde composer first "performed" by a pianist in 1952. "Mine is a much better silent piece," declared Batt. "I have been able to say in one minute what Cage could only say in four minutes and 33 seconds." In the end, however, Batt settled out of court for a rumoured £100,000 [*FT*165:25]. *Independent*, 19 May; *D.Telegraph*, 12 June 2012. For Ralph Rugoff's feature on the wonderful and enigmatic Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles, see *FT*100:22–24.



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NOISES OFF...

UNEXPLAINED HUMS, BOOMS AND RUMBLES FROM IRELAND TO CANADA, FROM WISCONSIN TO INDIA

● For several months, residents of Beaufort parish in Co. Kerry, Ireland, have been plagued by a constant pulsating, low-frequency humming noise, the source of which can't be traced. At least a dozen families within a four-mile (6km) radius were affected, and said it was making their lives a complete misery. One went to his family doctor and was relieved to learn that he wasn't suffering from tinnitus or any other problem with his hearing.

Resident Barry Lynch said: "The first time we heard [the hum] was in April 2011 and it has been there 24/7 since then. We have nearly gone out of our minds because we can't get a decent night's sleep." Describing it as similar to a diesel engine ticking over in a nearby field, he said it was even more noticeable indoors and, despite extensive insulation, his house appeared to vibrate, particularly in the stillness after dark. "There are no mobile phone masts, windmills or generators in the area and the ESB [power company] has assured us that the problem is not due to any high-tension wires. We thought the noise might be coming from water pumps installed in the area by Kerry County Council, but an engineer switched the pumps off for a trial period and the noise was still there," he said. On the other hand, something like 80 per cent of residents in the neighbourhood can't hear the noise at all.

Technicians with sophisticated detection equipment travelled to the remote townland of Glencuttane, nine miles (14km) from Killarney, at the foot of Carrauntoohil mountain, but were unable to solve the mystery. In April 2012, South Kerry TD (MP) Michael Healy-Rae, who had heard the noise himself, raised the issue with Ireland's environment minister Phil Hogan, who merely advised residents to report their concerns to Kerry County Council's environment office – a response lambasted by Mr Healy-Rae as "away with the fairies gobbledygook". *Irish Examiner*, 1 Mar, 3 April 2012.

● A similar low frequency hum or rumble has annoyed residents in the south-west neighbourhood of Windsor, Ontario, since March 2011 [FT284:10]. The Canadian Ministry

Clintonville CHRONICLE

volume 4, Number 12 CLINTONVILLE, WISCONSIN Tuesday, March 20, 2012

City of Clintonville is Booming

Byline: NHTZ reporter

CLINTONVILLE - Two residents of Clintonville, Wis., have reported a constant pulsating, low-frequency humming noise, the source of which can't be traced. At least a dozen families within a four-mile (6km) radius were affected, and said it was making their lives a complete misery. One went to his family doctor and was relieved to learn that he wasn't suffering from tinnitus or any other problem with his hearing.

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Knock, Knock? Ethan Selvik, 3, Clintonville, listens to the ground outside of his home on Lincoln Ave. on Monday as there were numerous reports of loud booming and rumbling in the North East quadrant of Clintonville. Multiple local media stations tonight reported on the incident which began on Sunday night. Photo by Liz Hoffman

District Approves Wireless Project

Byline: NHTZ reporter

CLINTONVILLE - The Clintonville Board of Directors has approved a wireless project in the North East quadrant of Clintonville. The project involves the installation of a wireless tower on the site of the former Clintonville High School. The tower will be used to provide wireless service to the surrounding area. The project was approved by a 6-2 vote of the Board of Directors. The project will be completed by the end of the year.

of the Environment had received up to 500 complaints about it. Testing had determined that the sound was coming from the general vicinity of Zug Island, an industrial site on the US side of the Detroit River. Officials from the city of River Rouge, Michigan, where Zug Island is located, said they didn't have the funds to find the source of the noise. *CBC News*, 21 April 2012.

Unidentifiable throbbing and humming noises have been heard around the world – including the Bristol Hum (at its height in the 1970s), the Largs Hum in Scotland in the 1990s, the Auckland (New Zealand) North Shore Hum in 2006 and the Bondi Buzz in Australia in 2009. For other hums and drones, see FT19:23 (Herefordshire, 1975); 65:12-13 (Hueytown, Alabama, 1991-92); 71:12 (Taos, New Mexico, 1991-93); 85:13 (Cornwall, 1995); 162:26 (Kokomo, Indiana, 1999-2002); 242:17 (Sudbury, Suffolk; Loch Ness; Green Bay, Wisconsin, 2008); and 278:8 (Woodland, Co. Durham, 2011).

● On Sunday, 18 March, five loud, mysterious booms shook the small Wisconsin town of Clintonville (pop. 4,600) at roughly two-hour intervals starting at around 8pm. The booms recurred on Monday night; Tuesday night passed peacefully but there were more on Wednesday night. Many residents were roused

LEFT: Local news coverage of the unexplained noises annoying a small Wisconsin town.

from bed and went outside. The Clintonville Police Department received over 250 calls about the disturbance.

It sounded like distant thunder, fireworks or someone slamming a heavy door. City officials investigated every possible human cause. They checked water, sewer and gas lines, contacted the military about any exercises in the area, reviewed permits for mining explosives, inspected a dam next to city hall, and tested methane levels at the local landfill in case it was spontaneously exploding. The disturbance had left cracks in Sharon Binger's basement walls and floor, which were getting

worse. She said her insurance company refused to pay for the damage unless she could explain what had caused it.

Flippant speculation on the Internet blamed gremlins, alien machinery buried for millennia or mole men launching an attack on surface dwellers. Harold Tobin of the Geoscience department at the University of Wisconsin ruled out "standard earthquake activity". After examining several seismometers in the area, he said it was "an especially noisy site, but not noisy enough to cause the sounds people there are describing". These seemed to be coming either from the ground surface or just underneath, but he was just as puzzled as anyone else.

Steve Dutch, a geologist at the University of Wisconsin, told a packed public meeting in the town that the ground beneath them was solid and there were no known earthquake fault lines in the area. He had heard that some people were worried that a sinkhole might open up and swallow houses. That can happen in areas above limestone and other water-soluble rocks, he said, but the rock below Clintonville was mainly solid granite that was largely impermeable. However, he speculated that water and granite could hold the key to the mystery. Granite has small cracks that water can fill, and if the water table falls especially low, this water can seep

2012 WATCH

PETER BROOKESMITH READS THE LATEST ITEMS OF END OF THE WORLD NEWS

out, leaving gaps that cause the rocks to settle and generate loud noises. "Maybe the very dry winter caused more water to be removed from the water table, either through pumping or natural flow," he said.

Unexplained booming noises first came to general notice in the late 19th century near the town of Barisal on the Ganges delta, hence the generic term of 'Barisal guns'. They have also recently been reported from North Carolina, Idaho, and Tennessee. In the Seneca Lake region of New York State they are called 'Seneca guns'; in the Italian Apennines they are described as *brontidi* (thunder-like); in Japan they are *yan*; and along the coast of Belgium they are called *mistpoffers* (fog belches). For unexplained booms in North Cornwall and in Uruguay, all on 26 October 2006, see **FT218:13**. *New Scientist*, 18 Feb; [CNN] 19 Mar; *ABC News*, 21 Mar; [AP] *Discovery News*, 23 Mar 2012.

● Three times on 15 March – at 9.30am, 10am, and 11am – loud rumbles rattled windows, dishes and nerves from Langford to Otter Point on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. They sounded like sustained thunder, or God bowling. The last rumble was the most intense, bringing down a ramshackle barn in Otter Point belonging to Sharon Hanslip. Seismologist Honn Kao of the Pacific Geoscience Centre in Sidney, Vancouver Island, said it wasn't an earthquake. Also discounted was the dismantling of the Elwha River dam west of Port Angeles, as there had been no blasting there for a month. Likewise, none of the jets flying out of Naval Air Station Whidbey Island came anywhere close, according to a spokesman.

There had been a similar bout of the Rumbles in Oak Bay and the east side of the Saanich Peninsula throughout the summer of 2009, but no explanation was found. Another series that shook Sooke in January 2012 was blamed on everything from supersonic jets to something called a 'whistler', in which energy from a thunderstorm can travel from hemisphere to hemisphere through magnetic-field lines and create a sound. But no one really knows. *Victoria (BC) Times Colonist*, 26+31 Jan, 17 Mar 2012.



PLEIADEANS TO THE RESCUE

Despite their reputation for promoting love, peace, cosmic harmony and good vibrations – as well as tree-, whale-, fox-, and bunny-hugging and other such benign and benevolent notions – a surprising proportion of New Agers foresees much mayhem and countless megadeaths when the Shift of Ages arrives this coming December. Could this be because they don't really care very much for their fellow humans?

Barbara Hand Clow (above), an astrologer by trade, doesn't care very much for her fellow men. Says she: "In my opinion, the reason this transition is so horrific is that the patriarchy must die so the betrayed feminine can again reign on Earth. I equate the feminine with all that is sacred and whole, and I totally trust this process." Gird up your loins, chaps. There shall be smiting.

It's not just blokes who are in for it. "If humans do not overcome the paradigm and embrace the Nine Realms of Consciousness of the Pleiadians, they are doomed... After 2011 to 2012, only these people will survive and be in 'ecstatic communion with nature and the Creator'." Such humans as the Tlingit, Tsimshian, Wogeo, Lele, Ifugao, Basseri, Chagga (and so on), who never subscribed to the "Western imperialist paradigm" in the first place, are doomed too, then? Typically of New Agers, when Clow says "humans" she means white folks in Langley, Virginia, and Sedona, Arizona, and a few other places such as distant, inscrutable Europe – revealing an unfortunate, ethnocentric colonialist streak of her own.

Clow has, of course, a way to avoid Doom: take one of her courses, enticingly named *Pleiadian Agenda Activations*. Clow knows all about Pleiadians, and they know all about her:

she regularly channels the Goddess Satya of that parish and, according to her website, when teaching Clow "is joyful and loves to crack jokes, in typical Pleiadian fashion". On the third day of her workshops, Pleiadians (invisibly, one assumes, but accompanied by music) join the throng to "conduct the journey into the center of the Earth". Clow "brings the group into resonance with the iron-core crystal in the first dimension. Then the group experiences each of the [nine] dimensions [of the mind]..." One who survived all this testified: "I'm no longer a galactic virgin." Really. Another averred: "The trees want to hear the music, to be reconnected as well."

In case you were wondering, the Pleiadians say that "harmonic biology is seeding the Milky Way." This new biology apparently comes from Earth and will be spread throughout the Galaxy on 21 December 2012. During the run-up to that date, says Clow, time has been accelerating and "intensifying", making it difficult for people to absorb all the spiritual energy flying about. Naturally, her courses will sort that out for those imperialists who can afford them. But where would they leave another odd 2012 prophet, Daniel Srsa, whose take on 2012 insists that time is slowing down? And what about Nancy Lieder, who gets all her stuff about 2012 from the Zeta Reticulans? More on those two later.

SOURCES

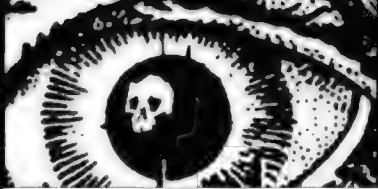
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ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER DIG

In 2010, Boston University archaeologist William Saturno and PhD student Franco Rossi discovered a long-lost Maya chamber at Xultún, Guatemala. Its most striking feature was a series of almost perfectly preserved, and unique, 1,200-year-old murals. The walls were also "rife with calculations that helped... track vast amounts of time". In 2011, Saturno led a team in a full excavation of the site. In early May this year, *Science* published a report of their findings. The chamber, it appears, was the workroom of a scribe, or record-keeper. Rossi explained to National Geographic News that the numbers on the wall were "fixed tabulations... tables more or less like those in the back of your chemistry book". No mention of 2012, and the columns of numbers include dates as far as 7,000 years into the future. Were the Maya that badly in hock to their credit cards? How come no New Ager has thought of that?

SOURCES

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GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE reports on mass hunts for djinn in Saudi Arabia and other ghostly panics.



SEARCHING FOR SPIRITS

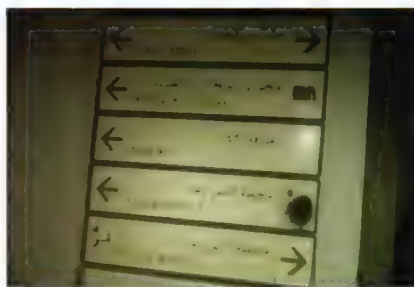
In May, an Internet campaign in Arabic declaring a "National Day to Invade Dwelling Places of Djinn" resulted in groups of youths breaking into abandoned buildings in Saudi Arabia and the arrest of over 30 teenagers. Police swooped after a mob of excited ghost-hunters, possibly several hundred strong, broke into the abandoned Irqa (or Araqa) hospital in Riyadh and then moved on to try and storm another hospital at Hafr Al Batin, intending to capture on video images of the djinn rumoured to infest the building.

Djinn (singular: djinni, jinni or genie) are supernatural beings mentioned in the Qur'an, and featuring in Arab folklore and in Islamic cultures around the world [see **FT138:17, 147:30-33, 268:8**]. Djinn may be good, bad or indifferent towards human beings, having originally been created by Allah from smokeless fire. (Djinn, humans and angels make up the three sentient creations of Allah.) Traditionally, djinn haunt lonely and empty places and properties, and display a number of similarities with ghosts and poltergeists in the Western world. In his twilight years, the late Gordon Creighton, long-time editor of *Flying Saucer Review*, expressed the view that some UFOs were linked to djinn manifestations.

The Irqa hospital, which had stood empty for 20 years, suffered the worst assault from the youths. "Teenagers sent text messages calling for an operation against some of the Jinn who live in the hospital, and they broke into the hospital and smashed its facilities and burned 60 per cent of it," according to a report in *Okaz* newspaper which was picked up by the international press.

Others sites on the Saudi most-haunted list included houses in Dammam and Njran, an apartment building in Jubail and another hospital at Jeddah. By the time the youths

Traditionally, djinn haunt lonely and empty places and properties



LEFT: The abandoned Irqa hospital in Riyadh.

BELOW: Images from a video apparently shot by youths who had managed to get inside the hospital.

arrived at the empty hospital at Hafr Al-Batin, the police had been alerted to their campaign by suspicious local residents and arrests followed swiftly.

Brigadier General Zeya Al-Maqati, official spokesman of Eastern Province police, confirmed that a group of youths was held for trying to break into the abandoned building, but later released from detention after they promised not to return to the hospital.

The actions of the djinn-hunters and the scandal of the empty hospitals attracted equal comment from the Saudi media. One columnist for *Okaz* newspaper stated: "I think it is high time the authorities form a special committee to address the Jinn epidemic. Their most important priority should be to serve the citizens whose homes have been possessed with Jinn. It would be no understatement to say we are sick and tired of evil sorcerers. No day passes without having stories about their antics."

Expressing understanding for the young people arrested, whom he saw as misled by "ghostly illusions", and viewing them as "a group of young people who are fed with false information that is not based on religion or science", the columnist instead attacked the waste of healthcare resources, demanding to know why fully equipped hospitals had been left to decay and why no one from the Ministry of Health was prepared to comment or take responsibility.

Sources: Khaled Al-Suleiman: "Interrogating the Jinn", *Okaz*, 24 May; *SaudiGazette.com*, 27 May; [R] 31 May 2012.

This outbreak of mass djinn-hunting in Saudi Arabia has parallels with popular ghost panics and crazes in Britain over the last two centuries where, on occasion, the stock horror film image of a mob of peasants or enraged citizens setting out to hunt down a vampire or monster has not been far from reality. Mass ghost-hunts have been a social phenomenon in urban districts of Great Britain over many decades, with enough examples to fill a batch of scholarly papers. Owen Davies has documented a number of examples in his book on the social history of ghosts, *The Haunted* (2007). Doubtless, many more await discovery in old newspapers and "Mass ghost hunting in working-class communities 1800-2000" might make a worthy title for any interested history student.

Examples in the 20th century include the mob which gathered outside a cemetery in Yarmouth, Norfolk, in 1914 hoping for a glimpse of a ghost, the crowds who waited outside a poltergeist-afflicted house in West Norwood in 1952, the infamous "vampire with iron teeth" hunt in Glasgow in 1954 and the crowd who stormed into Highgate Cemetery in north London looking for a vampire in March 1970.

Indeed, watered-down versions occur annually every Hallowe'en at many reputedly haunted sites across Great Britain, often requiring police



ABOVE: The block of flats in Tomika, Japan, where poltergeist activity was investigated.

BELOW: A sketch of one of the ghostly entities reported to make appearances there.

attendance. Ease of modern travel may mean that people can travel many miles to take part once word spreads about manifestations. In some cases, such forays have become annual traditions in themselves, as at the site of the long-gone Borley Rectory in Essex where Harry Price first complained about young people turning up to act the goat after dark over 70 years ago – see his 1940 book *The Most Haunted House in England*.

As the Saudi example shows, such excitable group behaviour is cross-cultural; similar problems also occurred in Japan in 2000 when parapsychologists attempted to investigate poltergeist phenomena in an empty block of flats at Tomika, in the district of Gifu, close to the centre of Japan Island.

Phenomena in the apartments included rapping sounds, footsteps, a mysteriously ringing telephone, sounds of a crying baby and the movement of crockery – and eventually everyone moved out. However, serious investigations were eclipsed by widespread media coverage that attracted mediums and tourists from all over Japan, including many excitable individuals and amateur exorcists wanting to perform their own religious rituals to tackle the spirits.

Sources: Bill Ellis: "The Highgate Cemetery Vampire Hunt", *Folklore* 104, 1993, pp13–39; Philip Paul: *Some Unseen Power*, 1985; Hideyuki Kokubo, Mikio Yamamoto & Tatsu Hirukawa: "Case Report on Anomalous Electro-Magnetic Signals: Research of Poltergeist Incident at Gifu, Japan", *Proceedings of Psi Meeting: Reflections on the Future of Parapsychology*, UNIBEM, Curitiba, Brazil, April 2004.



Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

157. MUSCLE TURNS TO FAT

The myth

If you build up a lot of muscle through exercise, and then become more sedentary in your habits, the muscle will turn into fat – which is why you see so many wobbly ex-athletes.



HUNT EMMERSON

The "truth"

It is physically impossible for muscle to "turn into" fat – they are made from two different types of cell. For muscle to become fat (or, indeed, for fat to become muscle, through exercise) would be like turnips turning into ball bearings. Muscle cells and fat cells perform different functions, and work in different ways. When you reduce the amount of exercise your skeletal muscles are receiving, they shrink. When you increase the amount of exercise, they grow. Similarly, fat cells expand or contract according to the amount of food they are given. The reason that so many retired sportsmen look flabby or overweight is not that their formerly impressive musculature has undergone magical transformation which has caused it to melt into fat; it's almost certainly because during their sporting careers they became used to eating large amounts, and have not subsequently reduced their daily calorie intake in line with the reduction in their physical activity. Plus, of course, commentary boxes are notorious cake-magnets.

Sources

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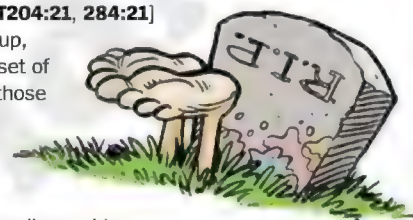
Disclaimer

The experts are pretty unequivocal about this, but, as ever, if you know better, you are invited to exercise your right to reply via FT's letters page.

Update

We've previously discussed [FT204:21, 284:21]

people being buried standing up, rather than lying down. A sub-set of these verticalists consists of those who had themselves interred upside down, generally for religious reasons. For instance, Major Peter Labelliere (1726–1800) is buried standing on his head at Box Hill, in Surrey, so that on Judgement Day, when "the world is turned upside down", he will be the right way up. (See <http://bbc.in/LE6uye> (BBC).



FOR MORE MYTHCONCEPTIONS, GO TO:

www.forteanimes.com/strangedays/mythbusters

MEDICAL ROUND-UP

Bones turning to stone, self-healing tumours, embedded objects, plus dog chews toe, saves owner

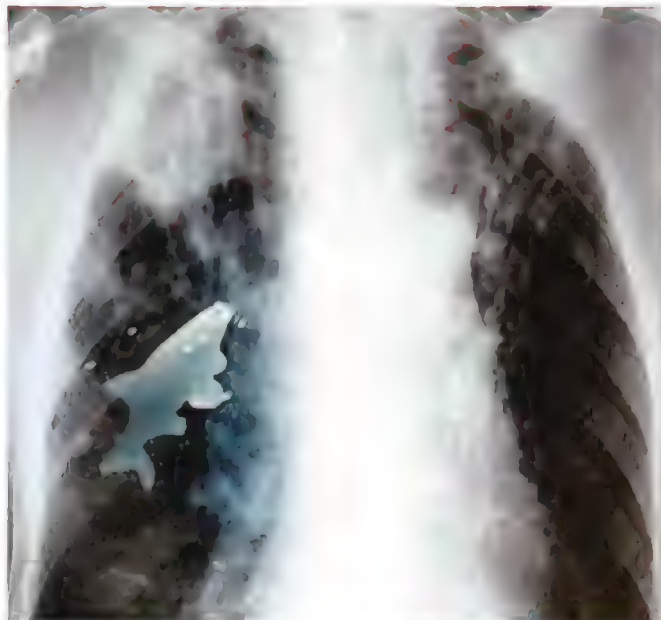
TURNING INTO A STATUE

Lucy Pratt, 25, who works for a publisher in London, has a rare condition that is turning her into a human statue. She suffers from fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva (FOP), sometimes referred to as 'Stone Man Syndrome', an extremely rare disease of the connective tissue. A mutation of the body's repair mechanism causes fibrous tissue (including muscle, tendon, and ligament) to be ossified when damaged. In many cases, injuries can cause joints to become permanently frozen in place. Even the slightest bump or knock can cause extra bone growth. Surgical removal of extraneous bone causes the body perversely to 'repair' the affected area with more bone. Already Ms Pratt's neck is locked and she can't move her head. She has restricted movement in her jaw and is unable to raise her arms above her head. Large painful ribbons of bone have formed across her back.

Only about 45 people in Britain have been diagnosed with FOP. The most famous sufferer was Harry Eastlack. By the time of his death from pneumonia in November 1973, shortly before his 40th birthday, his body had completely ossified, leaving him able to move only his lips. Following his wishes, his preserved skeleton resides at the Mütter Museum in Philadelphia, and has proved to be an invaluable source of information on FOP. *D.Express*, 2 June 2012.

SAVED BY A COUGH

● A mother of six accidentally saved her own life when she coughed up an inoperable cancerous tumour. Claire Osborn, 37, was at home in Coventry on 11 October 2011 when she felt a scratching sensation in her throat. After five minutes' coughing, she said, "I felt something fleshy come up my throat. It looked like a strip of liver. I didn't think too much about it and threw it away. The next day I was in the car with my son and the same thing happened again but this time the



The live fish entered his left lung via his windpipe

lump was much bigger, about 2cm [0.8in] long. I knew something was very wrong so I went straight to my GP who sent the tissue sample away for tests."

The tissue was found to be an aggressive throat and mouth cancer, and Mrs Osborn was told she probably had more tumours in her body. "I just thought I was going to die," she said. "The mortality rate for this cancer is quite high, about 50 per cent, so I started saving for my funeral." However, a scan came back negative and she was given the all-clear. Surgeon Gary Walton at University Hospital Coventry said: "We suspect the tumour grew on a stalk at the back of her mouth, which is very difficult to detect. Somehow she dislodged this, the stalk snapped and she coughed up the tumour." Fewer than 30 similar cases have ever been recorded in the medical

literature. *D.Mail*, *Metro*, *Sun*, 11 Jan 2012.

● A schoolgirl baffled doctors set to give her a life-saving transplant after they found her kidney was healing itself. Emily Clark, nine, was about to go under the knife when tests showed her organ function had improved from 18 per cent to 35 per cent. "She is a little fighter, but she has a good angel looking after her," said her mother Claire, 34, from Newcastle. Emily had twice fought cancer and had her other kidney removed after it failed. *Metro*, 21 Nov 2011.

FOREIGN BODIES

● Anil Barela swallowed a 9cm (3½in) fish while playing on a riverside with friends in the Khargone district of India's Madhya Pradesh state. Swallowing live fish was a much-loved game of Anil and his friends, but this time instead of going down his oesophagus it entered his left lung via his windpipe. Anil soon started feeling short of breath and, when he was taken to hospital, doctors discovered the oxygen levels in his blood had plummeted. The fish was removed in a 45-minute operation. Dr Pramod Jhawar, chest specialist and bronchoscope expert, told the *Times of India*: "An X-ray displayed the left lung completely opaque due to the presence of a foreign object. The fish was live and taking its last breath when the bronchoscopy was done, restricting the functioning of both the lungs resulting in low intake of oxygen. It is the first case of this sort that we have come across in 20 years." *web.orange.co.uk*, 31 May; *D.Mail*, *Sun*, 1 June 2012.

● Bianca Riveron, 62, from Seminole Heights in Florida, who moved to the US from Cuba in 1994, had suffered for 28 years from a debilitating cough. Her breathing was laboured and she had been treated countless times for asthma and pneumonia. Last December, she coughed up blood



TOP: X-ray shows the accidentally inhaled fish in Anil Barela's lung.

ABOVE: Lucy Pratt's tissues are ossifying.

and an X-ray showed a dark spot in her lung, which doctors suspected was cancer. When she called her daughter Melody in Cuba with the sad news, the daughter reminded her that in 1984 she had accidentally swallowed the seed of a fruit called a Nispero while shouting at her children. Mrs Riveron had forgotten all about it and doubted that could be the explanation; but a few weeks later, after a second endoscopy, she was sitting at a traffic light and started coughing violently when out came the seed. Her cough was cured. "I can breathe, I can sleep," she said. "My life has changed completely." *WTSP-TV (St Petersburg, FL)*, 27 April 2012.

● Shelley Ellis, 41, a hairdresser from Bexhill, East Sussex, visited her doctor for a chest infection and was astonished when he found a red plastic bead stuck in her left ear. "It must have been there since I was a child," she said. *Metro*, 9 Feb; *Sun*, 10 Feb 2012.

● Jaina Haq, six, from Chingford in Essex, endured a year of pain after doctors failed to spot she had a wooden bead stuck up her nose. She suffered painful ear, nose and throat infections and was bullied at school because the bead caused a rattling noise and a bad smell. It also made her snore and changed her voice. She was examined 16 times by doctors and dentists, but the pea-sized bead was only spotted when her interpreter father, Mohammed, 35, shone a bicycle lamp up her nose. He removed it with a cotton bud and wondered why no one had seen it before. *D.Mirror*, *Sun*, 6 Mar 2012.

● Andy Parsons, 31, from Knaresborough, has had the tip of a pool cue removed from his brain after skewering himself through the eye when he slipped over during a game. Doctors in Leeds initially thought he was only hurt superficially and stitched his eyelid; but his eye failed to reopen properly after three months and an MRI scan revealed the pool cue tip was embedded in his brain. Surgeons spent 10 hours removing part of his skull, following the entry route of the cue and removing the tip, before rebuilding the top of his nose and brow. "I never thought pool was such a dangerous game," he said. *MX News (Sydney)*, 27 Mar 2012.

● Robert Mitchell, 63, was stunned when surgeons carrying out a hernia operation at Torbay Hospital last December ended up extracting an inch-long bullet left lodged in his leg for 40 years. The Royal Navy commando had long been plagued by groin pain. He now thinks he must have been shot during a raid into Vietnam with US troops in 1971, when he was 22. "We were storming a Viet Cong village which we believed had a big ammunition dump," he said. "I got hit by a mortar and was blown up. I think I could have been shot in the groin then but just not realised." He now wears the bullet on a chain round his neck. (An online military discussion group at <http://bit.ly/Lb02jD> (prmc.royalnavy.mod.uk) suggest that it is unlikely that Mr Mitchell could have served in an RN commando unit in Vietnam, and that the decorations and badges he claims or is shown wearing are suspect. General consensus there considers him a "walt" (as in Walter Mitty). Although he must have been shot *somewhere*.) *D.Express*, 14 April 2012.

TOE CHEWED OFF, LIFE SAVED

Jerry Douthett, 48, a musician from Rockford, Michigan, passed out in a stupor one Saturday night in late July 2010, having consumed six beers and two giant margaritas. He woke up to find his Jack Russell Terrier, Kiko, had chewed off and eaten most of his right big toe. "I looked down at my foot, and it was wet," he said. "When I looked it was blood, and there was the dog looking at me with a blood moustache."

Douthett's wife, Rosee, a registered nurse, had been urging him for weeks to have his toe examined by a doctor, as it was badly infected, but he ignored her advice. She rushed him to hospital, where he was found to be suffering from potentially lethal Type 2 diabetes. Surgeons amputated the remainder of the toe. The couple said they were amazed that Kiko appeared to know Douthett had an infection that needed treatment. "He kind of chewed off the infected part and stopped at the good bone," said Rosee. "If it hadn't been for that dog, I could have ended up dead," said Mr Douthett. "I don't think Kiko would do it again, but I wear shoes to bed now." *Mlive.com*, 3 Aug; *[R] Metro*, *Sun*, 5 Aug 2010.



KONSPIRACY KORNER

ROBIN RAMSAY, EDITOR OF LOBSTER MAGAZINE,
REPORTS FROM THE BUNKER ON...
BILDERBERG'S NEW OPENNESS AND 'REAL' CONSPIRACIES

The English-speaking world of conspiracy theories now has three regular events on its calendar. There's 11 September – 9/11 – with formal remembrance and calls for inquiries from the '9/11 truth' activists. November, of course, is JFK, when the buffs gather in Dallas to remember and complain about official cover-ups. And early June is now the annual Bilderberg meeting. But things have changed this year. No longer do intrepid researchers have to winkle out lists of participants from who-knows-where: this year the Bilderberg organisation sent out a press release with a list of this year's guests and the meeting's agenda. The TV historian Niall Ferguson is the surprising new attendee.

This new openness has slightly discombobulated the country's leading anti-Bilderberg activist, Tony Gosling, who runs www.bilderberg.org. His email response to the official press release was headed: "A list coming directly from Bilderberg? I'm not really confident. Plus, there might be 'unofficial attendees'". Yes, behind the apparent openness there might still be a secret core.

What Gosling and friends will not accept is that it has been a while since Bilderberg tried to be a real secret. When I wrote to their office in 1999, I got a prompt answer to my request for information.

Bilderberg was modelled loosely on the earlier Anglophile network set up by Cecil Rhodes which centred on the Round Table, another conspirasphere staple. These days you can simply Google the group.¹ But in the early 1980s one of the few sources of information on them was a person or group in America called 'A-Albionic', selling books and pamphlets. I recently discovered that, of course, A-Albionic is now a website. For A-Albionic in the 1980s the "real conspiracy" was Rhodes's English-speaking network. This is their "real conspiracy" today: "By and large the 'conspiracy' community has it all wrong. Bush, the neoCons, Israel are the floundering opposition to the over-arching 'one world' pro-UN, anti-US conspiracy led by the Rockefellers and their long-time Saudi partners... The Rockefellers invented 'environmentalism/global warming' to protect their Saudi partners which has been key to their empire since World War II when they manipulated the US Government into building the pipe line to Saudi Arabia for free."²

Which certainly gets points for originality and for nostalgia – the Rockefellers! – but promptly loses them for the idiotic suggestion that anyone invented "environmentalism".

A more recent addition to the conspirasphere, state-sponsored mind-control, was recently mentioned in the columns of the *Guardian* for the first time to my knowledge. In a book review, Professor Steven Rose discussed the military's interest in how to read and manipulate our brains remotely. Rose noted that "many US citizens already believe that their brains are being read or manipulated by the surveillance state – and judging by my email inbox, a fair number on this side of the Atlantic share the suspicion."³ If his email correspondents on this subject are like mine, most are a long, weary way past mere "suspicion".

It is now 30 years since the Finn, Martti Koski, began distributing his pamphlet about being a mind-control victim. Since when, while the number making similar claims has soared and the military's interest in the technology has been acknowledged, we remain stuck: the technology exists and so the victims' claims might be true. But how do we distinguish between genuine victims and the deluded? Until this can be done, neither major media nor politicians will go near the subject.

NOTES

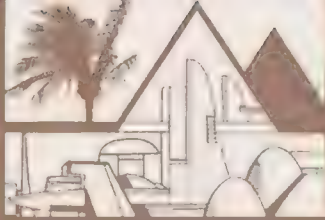
¹ Google "Round Table movement".

² <http://bit.ly/PyJEll> (a-albionic.com).

³ <http://bit.ly/JTFsVc> (guardian.co.uk).



GETTY IMAGES / AP / JOSEF LAGO



ARCHAEOLOGY

PAUL SIEVEKING reports on more 'vampire burials' uncovered in the Balkans, and an ancient skull found in Florida which seems to show links to the Inca civilisation of the Andes.

UNDEAD RECKONING



GETTY IMAGES / AFP / NIKOLAY DOVCHINOV

Near a monastery in the Black Sea town of Sozopol in Bulgaria, archaeologists have found two 13th-century skeletons pierced through the chest with iron rods, supposedly to stop them from turning into vampires. According to the *Daily Telegraph* (but no other source that *FT* has seen), one of the deceased was "said to be a pirate called Krivich Crooked" [*sic*]. About the same time, archaeologist Nikolay Ovcharov made a similar find in a monastery courtyard in the central Bulgarian town of Veliko Tarnovo. The grave contained a man in his 30s dating back at least several centuries.

"The skeleton was tied to the ground with four iron clamps," said Ovcharov, "while burning embers were placed on top of his grave." A few years ago in the same courtyard, he had unearthed another skeleton, hands tied and subjected to similar rites.

Around 100 similar burials have been found in Bulgaria, with more in neighbouring Serbia and other Balkan countries. In 2004, archaeologist Petar Balabanov discovered six nailed-down skeletons at a site near the eastern Bulgarian town of Debel. Another recent find was 3,000 Czech graves where the bodies were weighed down with rocks

to keep the dead in their place. Sometimes, the rocks are placed in the mouths of the dead – for example in two eighth-century skeletons in Co. Roscommon, Ireland [FT283:18], and one found in a 1576 plague pit near Venice [FT249:18]. This might be explained by the fact that in some regions, vampires were known as "shroud-eaters", because – on disinterment – the cloth covering the corpse's face appeared to have been eaten away, revealing the teeth. In fact, the bacteria in the mouth had dissolved the linen.

Bozhidar Dimitrov, head of the National History Museum in the Bulgarian capital Sofia, said the 'vampires' were often aristocrats and clerics. "The curious thing is that there are no women [buried in this way]," he added. "They were not afraid of witches... These skeletons stabbed with rods illustrate a practice which was common in some Bulgarian villages up until the first decade of the 20th century." And indeed much later – the rite was performed in Romania as recently as 2004, when Petre Toma, 76, a supposed vampire, was dug up, his chest opened with a wooden stake, and his heart removed and burnt [FT187:22].

Similar vampire 'remedies' were practised in New England in the 19th century – records of at least 16 cases have been found. It was believed that those who died of consumption (tuberculosis) returned from the dead, feeding on the blood of their kinsfolk and causing them to waste away. Dead consumptives were sometimes disinterred, their hearts burned and the ashes used in medicine [FT80:46-47]. [AFP] *BBC News*, 6 June; *D.Mail*, 6+7 June; *D.Telegraph*, 9 June 2012.

FLORIDA SKULL MYSTERY

Last January, a plumber installing an in-ground swimming pool in Winter Garden, Florida, came upon a piece of bone. Medical examiner Jan Garavaglia determined that it was from the face of a child aged about 10, with some human tissue still intact on the bone. She alerted the police, as it could have been a recently deceased child, buried illegally. Further investigation revealed the skull of an adult man, together with shards of pottery and textiles and a scrap of newspaper dated 1978. However, forensic

RIGHT: Dr Jan Garavaglia and Dr John Schultz discuss the 'Peruvian' bones.



JOE BURBANK / ORLANDO SENTINEL / MCT VIA GETTY IMAGES

investigation showed the bones dated to between AD 1200 and 1400, and the human tissue on the child's cheek had been mummified. The skulls featured an 'Inca bone', a telltale sign of a human from the Incan culture of Peru (the Incan civilisation arose some time in the early 13th century), and cloth items found with the bones were identified as primitive slings and purses made of woven materials and non-human hair.

So how had these apparently Incan remains ended up buried in Florida? "Back in the 1930s or 1940s, people would go on vacation and buy things like that, and maybe they buried them when they didn't want them anymore," Dr Garavaglia speculated. "Another possibility is that [the site] used to be a migrant farm worker camp, and some cultures will bring part of their heritage with them when they leave. It could be that they were moving on and decided to bury it there." Still, we are free to conjure up much stranger scenarios. *ABC News*, 15 May 2012.

We recall that five years ago Norwegian archaeologists were puzzled by a find that suggested an Inca Indian died and was buried in the city of Sarpsborg, 45 miles (73km) southeast of Oslo, 1,000 years ago. The remains of two elderly men and a baby were discovered when two rose bushes were moved near the church of St Nicholas. One of the men had a cranium with a split neck bone, a so-called 'Inca bone'. That is, he was the bearer of a rare hereditary trait where the seam between the two points called asterion in the rear of the neck does not ossify and close during foetal development in the usual way. In people with an Inca bone, this seam remains visible throughout their lives. This trait occurs almost exclusively in South American Indians, and is most common in Peru. As there were no South American artefacts from the site, the most parsimonious view is that the find demonstrated the existence of this trait among 11th-century Norwegians as well. Nevertheless, Mona Beate Buckholm, an archaeologist at the Borgarsyssel Museum who participated in the excavation, described the find as "sensational". *Afterposten* (Norway), 26 June 2007.

CLASSICAL CORNER



FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

153. HIGH-DE-HIGH!

(Dedicated to Peter Crouch)

Some classical curiosities supplementing our Mythchaser's "Titchy Ancestors" [FT284:21] and Andy Kelly's scientific information thereon [FT288:73].

In their *Book of Lists* (Bantam, New York, pp307–09), David Wallechinsky/Irving Wallace/Amy Wallace register 13 men and two women reputed to have been at least 8ft (2.4m) tall. Only two ancients qualify: Biblical Goliath ("6 cubits and a span" = c. 9ft 6in/2.9m) and the Roman emperor Maximinus of Thrace (AD 235–8), credited in the *Augustan History's* biography (ch6 para8) with 8ft 6in (2.6m).

Speaking of Roman emperors, Jovian (AD 363–4) was said (Ammianus, *History*, bk25 ch10 para12) to have been so tall that it was impossible to find an imperial robe big enough to fit him. Suetonius credits Julius Caesar and various emperors (e.g. Tiberius and Caligula) to have been unusually tall, without giving specifics. His *Life of Augustus* (ch79 para6) provides one interesting ancient yardstick, describing that emperor (5ft 7in/1.7m) as "short" and embarrassed by it.

Modern thinking seems generally to assume we top our ancestors. Ancient belief tended the other way. Pliny (*Natural History*, bk7 ch16 paras73–5) quotes Homer as lamenting that the men of his day were smaller than those in earlier times. His own view ("based on observation") was that the human race as a whole was becoming smaller, thanks to moral collapse (about which Pliny was forever banging on) reducing the fertile strength of semen – clearly running to seed.

Pliny's rich Græco-Roman repertoire begins with the discovery on Crete of a body 69ft (21m) high; also the remains of Orestes coming in at a more modest but still impressive 10ft 6in (3.2m). A cognate phenomenon was a boy at Salamis, 4ft 6in (1.4m) tall at the age of three, also sexually mature, who then died. Seneca (*To Marcia*, ch23 para5) reports a similar story from Nero's time. At Rome, there was a pair of 10-footers, man and woman, Pusio and Secundilla, buried in Augustus's time in the Gardens of historian Sallust.

The tallest person of Pliny's own time was Gabbara, 9ft 9in (3m), brought to Rome

from Arabia in Claudius's reign (AD 41–54). Some equate him with the lanky Jew said by Columella (*On Agriculture*, bk3 ch8 para2) to have been exhibited (shades of the 'Elephant Man') in the Circus, being "taller than the tallest Germans". Another impressive Jew was Eleazer, sent (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, bk18 ch4 para5) as a present to Tiberius (AD 14–37). This fellow was supposedly 7 ells (1 ell = c.45in, so 26ft 3in/8m) high – knocks ell out of Nazi Aryan Superman theories.

Contrariwise, Pliny and the other sources record freakishly small people: dwarves of both sexes around 2ft 6in (76cm), and two 3ft (90cm) Roman knights whose preserved bodies were on show in their coffins. Cf. R Garland's *Deformity & Disability in the Greco-Roman World* (Ithaca, 1995)

– while singing three choruses of "Bless 'Em All – The Long and the Short and the Tall"...

Phlegon, Greek freedman of Hadrian (AD 117–138), has a similar inventory to Pliny's in his *Book of Wonders* (English tr. by William Hansen, Exeter, 1996). He reiteratively agrees with Homer and Pliny that people were becoming shorter, now that "time was running down". Phlegon reports discoveries from Athens, Dalmatia (the Cave of Artemis), and Rhodes of skeletons in coffins ranging from 11 to 100 cubits, adding for good measure in the last case that this person (one Makroseiris) had lived 5,000 years.

Most commentators now think these remains were actually of ancient creatures rather than humans – make no bones about that. Worth noting that Augustine's discussion (*City of God*, bk15 ch23; bk16 ch8) from the Christian perspective regards animal monstrosities as early failures of creation, while himself reporting the human case of a Roman woman who towered above everyone else, drawing gaping crowds – shades of that Hollywood horror *Attack of The 50Ft Woman*). Augustine toyed with the idea that giant humans in early times were the result of angels mating with women – time to hum the Penguins' classic ditty 'Earth Angel'.

"Dr. Berman's announcement was that the sorcerers of his cult – the endocrinologists – would breed human beings sixteen feet high." – Fort, *Books*, p972



FALLING FROM A GREAT HEIGHT

PLUNGING OVER THE FALLS, TIGHTROPE WALKER'S SUCCESS PLUS OTHER FALL SURVIVORS



ABOVE LEFT: A rare survivor is rescued after plunging over Niagara Falls. ABOVE RIGHT: Nik Wallenda became the first person to walk across the most ferocious section.

● On 21 May, a man became only the third person in history to survive plunging over Niagara Falls without a safety device. In an apparent suicide attempt, he fell 180ft (55m) into the water, but escaped with relatively minor injuries and managed to get himself to shore unaided. Niagara Falls – the collective name for the Horseshoe Falls, the adjacent American Falls and the Bridal Veil Falls – carry water at a rate of 150,000 gallons (682,000 litres) a second and are the most powerful in North America.

CCTV footage shows the man, thought to be in his 30s or 40s, approaching Horseshoe Falls on the Canadian side at about 10.20am, vaulting a fence and jumping about 30ft (9m) into the water. He surfaced (minus his shirt) in the Lower Niagara River basin near the Journey Behind the Falls observation platform. It took seven rescuers two hours to lower themselves on ropes to

reach him. He was airlifted to hospital in Hamilton, Ontario, with broken ribs, a collapsed lung, and cuts to his head.

“He was very lucky,” said Dan Orescanin, chief of the Niagara Falls Fire Department. “He just happened to come down the river into an eddy [a swirl of water caused by an obstacle, resisting the current flow] and that enabled him to get out. If he had been in the main current, he wouldn’t have survived. By the time we got to him, he was hypothermic. He was shaking like a leaf.”

In 1901, Annie Edson Taylor became the first person to go over the falls and live [FT45:62–66]. She was in a barrel; by 2007, 11 people had successfully gone over in a barrel. In 1960, seven-year-old Roger Woodward went over the falls (sans barrel) after his boat capsized, and survived with the help of his lifejacket. The first person to survive

without a safety device was Kirk Jones, a jobless salesman from Michigan, in 2003 [FT179:16]. He was charged with performing an illegal stunt and later joined a circus in Texas as “the world’s greatest stuntman”. The only other comparable incident was in 2009, when an unidentified 30-year-old Canadian man survived a suicide attempt. There are one or two suicide bids a week at the falls, including those who are rescued in the water above the drop. *D.Telegraph, D.Mail, Sun, 23 May 2012.*

● A different kind of Niagara survival was reported on 15 June, when Nik Wallenda became the first person to walk across the most ferocious section of Niagara Falls. The seventh-generation member of the Flying Wallendas circus family took 30 minutes to edge his way along an 1,800ft (550m), 2in (5cm)-diameter steel cable, balancing nearly 200ft

(60m) above the thundering falls, through swirling mist and gusting wind, arriving shortly after 10.30pm. The last person to cross part of the gorge was James Hardy in 1896, before a ban was imposed; but Wallenda, 33, is the first to complete the full stretch across the Horseshoe Falls, after a long battle with the US and Canadian authorities.

More than 100,000 people gathered on both sides of Niagara as he crossed from the US to Canada, while millions more watched the stunt on television as his chief sponsor, the ABC network, broadcast it live. Insurance requirements meant he had to wear a safety harness, even though he said he didn’t need it. (Until now, the Wallendas have never used nets or safety wires, a tradition that has claimed the lives of three of them.) To aid his balance, Nik held a 40ft (12m) pole, attached by a brace to his neck. His mother Delilah – also

A^z ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents
his regular round-up
from the crypto-
zoological garden

a funambulist – made him suede moccasins with elk-skin soles to prevent him slipping in the wet. For his next trick, he has the first permit to cross the Grand Canyon – roughly three times longer than the Niagara feat. *D.Mail*, 14 June; *NY Times*, 16 June; *Sunday Telegraph*, Mail on Sunday, 17 June 2012.

● There was a remarkable survival at another notorious American suicide location on 25 April 2011, when a motorist accidentally drove over the edge of the Grand Canyon in Arizona, six miles (10km) east of Grand Canyon Village. The car's fall down the mile (1,600m)-deep gorge was halted after 200ft (60m) when it crashed into a pine tree – just 10ft (3m) short of another sheer drop. The 21-year-old driver managed to scramble out of the wreck and climb back to the road on the south rim of the canyon. "Just a few feet to the side and he would have been in freefall to the bottom of the canyon," said a National Park Service range. "He is incredibly lucky to be alive." *D.Mail*, 29 April 2011.

● A six-year-old Egyptian girl called Dunia Reda survived a six-storey plunge from her apartment block in the Nabbah neighbourhood of Sharjah, one of the United Arab Emirates, on 5 January 2012. She lost her balance after opening a window and leaning out to chat with children playing downstairs. She was rushed to Kuwaiti Hospital in Sharjah, and a week later was recovering from her injuries. "I was falling fast at first, and very scared," she said, "but then I felt someone hold me as if I were a baby. I didn't drop as hard as I thought I would." She was still conscious after hitting the ground. She said she did not see "who saved me" but added: "It must have been an angel". Her father added: "I believe her, it was divine mercy. She keeps telling me about it, she is very excited... She was given a bracelet with 'Allah' written on it by her mum hours before the fall." *Gulf News*, 19 Jan 2012.



THE JOURNAL OF CRYPTOZOOLOGY

With the demise of *Cryptozoology*, published by the now-defunct International Society of Cryptozoology (ISC), there hasn't been a peer-reviewed scientific journal devoted to mystery beasts for many years. All of that changed on 27 February 2012, with the launch of the *Journal of Cryptozoology*, published by CFZ Press and edited by me. Supported by a distinguished team of advisors, some of whom may also double up as reviewers, the journal is planned at least initially as an annual publication containing a mixture of review articles, research papers and field reports. Further information, including submission guidelines for manuscript presentation, can be found here: <http://bit.ly/MEpjxo> (karlshuker.blogspot.co.uk), 27 Feb 2012.

CRYPTO-PRIMATE DATABASE

An official DNA database for certain cryptozoological material, known as the Oxford-Lausanne Collateral Hominid Project, has been established by Oxford University in collaboration with the Lausanne Museum of Zoology. It is hoped that institutions and individuals owning material allegedly derived from crypto-primates such as the orang pendek,

yeti (alleged cranial cap below), and bigfoot in the form of testable organic remains will submit samples to the Project for formal analysis. Once a sizeable database has been collected, the owners of the most intriguing, potentially significant samples on file will then be invited to submit them for rigorous genetic analyses, whose results will be published in peer-reviewed journals. <http://bit.ly/MgpOLq> (wired.co.uk), 22 May 2012.

NEW MOKÈLÉ-MBÈMBÉ EXPEDITION

Since the early 1980s, numerous expeditions have trekked through the vast Likouala swamplands of the People's Republic of the Congo in search of an elusive long-necked dinosaur-lookalike known as the mokèlè-mbèmbé. As yet, however, no conclusive evidence for this cryptid's existence has been obtained, but that has not dissuaded searches for it. What may become the latest in a long line is being organised by Stephen McCullah from Missouri, who has posted a request on Kickstarter.com for \$27,000 in donations, in order for him to be able to launch the four-man Newmac Expedition, which hopes to set forth on 26 June. *Yahoo News*, 18 April 2012.

YOWIE-SEEKING

Another mystery beast due to be the subject of a crypto-search this year is the yowie, Australia's mysterious man-beast. There has been a spate of recent yowie sightings reported around Lismore and Casino in northeastern New South Wales, including one, made by some hikers, of a pair of yowies moving through a forest. Veteran Australian cryptozoologists Rex Gilroy and wife Heather (directors of the Australian Yowie Research Centre) are now heading there to pursue several new leads. Fresh tracks found in the Lismore area correspond with versions previously obtained in the Kempsey and Blue Mountains countryside. Interestingly, all of these display an opposable big toe, which of course humans do not possess. <http://bit.ly/KGnUC> (northernstar.com.au), 14 June 2012.





FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS

Further news updates on stories previously covered in the pages of *Fortean Times*.



PASSENGER TURNS 'WENDIGO' [FT241:4-5]



A Chinese immigrant who beheaded and cannibalised a Canadian bus passenger in front of horrified travellers

four years ago has explained his actions for the first time. After being diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, Vince Weiguang Li (43) was found not guilty of murdering Tim McLean (22) on 30 July 2008. He has since been treated at a mental health centre near Winnipeg, Manitoba, and is now eligible for escorted day trips into the community.

In an interview with Chris Summerville, head of the Schizophrenia Society of Canada, Li said that in 2004 he started hearing what he then believed was the voice of God. "The voice told me that I was the third story of the Bible, that I was like the second coming of Jesus [and that] I was to save people from a space alien attack." He said he had bought the knife used in the bus butchery for protection from the aliens and claimed he was unaware at that time that he suffered from schizophrenia.

Li had repeatedly stabbed McLean, who had been asleep on the seat next to him, cut off his head, removed his internal organs, pocketed his nose, tongue and an ear, and taunted police and bystanders with the severed head. "I was really scared," he said. "I remember cutting off his head.

I believed he was an alien. The voices told me to kill him, that he would kill me or others. I do not believe this now." Li, a computer engineer who immigrated to Canada with his wife in 2001, said he was "really sorry" for what he had done. *BBC News*, 23 May; (Sydney) *D.Telegraph*, 24 May 2012.

MARCO POLO AND CHINA [FT281:10]



Marco Polo's *Description of the World* is allegedly based on his travels as a trader between 1271 and 1295, but there

are many variant manuscripts, some with considerable interpolations, and doubts have been cast on Polo's veracity since the mid-18th century. In her 1995 book, *Did Marco Polo Go To China?* [FT86:59], Frances Wood, head of the Chinese section in the British Library, suggested that the Venetian merchant never got further than the Black Sea. Polo says nothing about the Great Wall, tea, chopsticks, or foot-binding, and there is no mention of him in Chinese records. One theory is that Polo cobbled his work together from various, now lost, travel narratives by Persian merchants and others. Further doubt was cast recently by Italian archaeologists, who point to inconsistencies in Polo's description of Kublai Khan's attempted invasions of Japan in 1274 and 1281. He also used the Persian word for pitch (chunam) when talking

about making the hulls watertight, and wrote of five-masted ships when the archaeologists have unearthed three-masted vessels.

Hans Ulrich Vogel, Professor of Chinese Studies at the University of Tübingen, has now leapt to Polo's defence. In *Marco Polo was in China: New Evidence from Currencies, Salts and Revenues* (Brill Verlag), he draws on evidence from Chinese, Japanese, Italian, French, German and Spanish literature. The argument that Polo is not mentioned in any Chinese document overestimates the frequency of documentation and the intentions of Chinese historiographers. Even Giovanni de Mari-gnolli (1290-1357), an important Papal envoy at the court of the Yuan rulers, is not mentioned in any Chinese sources – nor his 32-man retinue, nor the name of the Pope. Only the "heavenly horse" sent as tribute from the "Kingdom of the Franks" in 1342 gets a mention.

Prof. Vogel shows that no other Western Arab or Persian observer reported in such accurate detail the currency situation in Mongol China as did Marco Polo. He alone describes precisely how paper for money was made from the bark of the mulberry tree (*Morus alba* L); he not only gives the shape and size of the paper, but also describes the use of seals and the various denominations of paper money. He reports on the monopoly of gold, silver, pearls and gems by the state – which enforced a compulsory exchange for paper money – and the punishment for counterfeiters, as well as the three per cent exchange fee for worn-out notes and the widespread use of paper money in official and private transactions.

Only Polo explains that paper money was not in circulation throughout China. It was used primarily in the north and along the Yangtze, but not in Fujian and certainly not in Yunnan, where cowries, salt, gold and silver were the main currencies. This information is confirmed by Chinese sources and by archaeological

LEFT: Marco Polo's caravan.

evidence. Most of these sources were collated or translated long after Polo's time, so he could not have drawn on them. He could not read Chinese.

Polo's description of salt production is also accurate and unique. He lists the most important salt production centres known to him: Changlu, Liang-huai, Liangzhe and Yunnan, as well as the authorities administering them. His description of the salt-making methods in Changlu agrees with Chinese documents of the Yuan era. Salt in the Venetian monopoly was produced in a different way. Polo's claims of the value of salt production – for instance, that the revenues from Kinsay brought in 5.8 million saggi of gold annually – can be checked against the exchange rate for paper money, convincing Prof. Vogel that Polo knew what he was talking about. *Science Daily*, 16 April 2012.

BACK FROM THE DEAD [FT289:10]



• In an effort to prevent premature burial, a town council in the central Turkish province of Malatya has equipped its

morgue with an electronic warning system (below), just in case any of the 'deceased' show signs of life. Each of the 36 refrigerators has been fitted with motion sensors, and any resurrected occupants will also be able to take advantage of interior door handles. Such precautions were taken at several mortuaries in the 19th century (FT146:34-39), but not – to *FT's* knowledge – in



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recent years. *Independent*, 23 Sept 2011.

● Magan Kanwar, 72, was declared dead from a brain haemorrhage in Jaipur, India. As female mourners prepared her body for a funeral pyre, they noticed her breathing and halted the ceremony. *MX News (Sydney)*, 27 Jan 2012.

● Lyudmila Steblitskaya, 60, a Russian mother of two, was declared dead from a stroke in a Moscow hospital. Three days later, as morgue staff prepared her for a post mortem examination, they noticed she was breathing. *Sun*, 10 Mar 2012.

ALLERGY SUFFERERS [FT289:16]

Georgina Dixon-Lane, 22, from Bracknell in Berkshire, does all her food shopping online. She hasn't visited a supermarket for five years, because going near bananas could kill her. She would risk a seizure and throat-swelling that could halt her breathing. The young mother suffers from idiopathic anaphylaxis disease, which also makes her allergic to most fruits and vegetables, paprika, nuts, bread and sausage rolls. She stays in regular contact with her immunologist who oversees her diet. "I can eat something one day and not suffer from any symptoms, but the next day it can trigger the whole process," she said. "I have to act quickly and administer an injection of adrenaline with my EpiPen to stop the reaction." *Sun*, 10 Dec 2011.

NOT SO COCKSURE [FT290:10-11]



Sinead Walker, 40, visited ex-partner Vince Rennoldson's flat in Bath, Somerset, on 28 December 2011 to apologise for an argument a fortnight earlier, during which she had assaulted him. When Rennoldson, 42, asked her to leave, she became abusive and lashed out at him, at which point he dialled 999. While he was on the phone, the mother-of-one – who had drunk a bottle of wine – pulled down his boxer shorts, grabbed his penis, tried to tear it off – and then bit it. He was left with a 3in (7.6cm) scar at the base of his organ. She was found guilty of assault on 18 April 2012 [and was due to be sentenced on 8 May]. *dailymail.co.uk*, *Sun*, 18 April 2012.

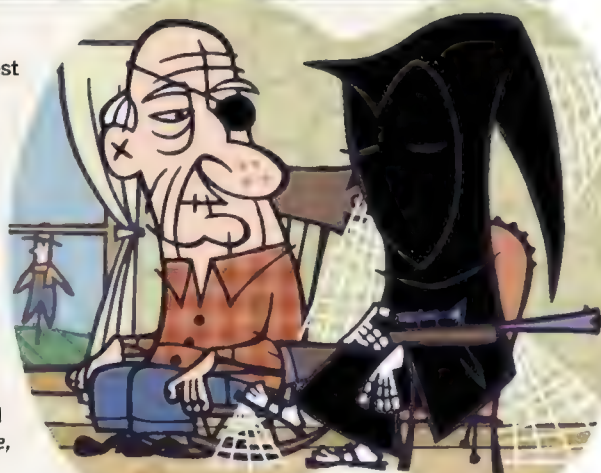
WILLIAM LAWLIS PACE, HOLDER OF THE Guinness World Record for living the longest with a bullet in his head, died on 23 April 2012 at a Californian nursing home at the age of 103. It was 94 years and six months since his older brother Marvin shot him accidentally with their father's .22 rifle in October 1917. Pace, who farmed for more than 60 years and sired two sons, was left with a damaged eye. Doctors in his home state of Texas left the bullet in place for fear surgery might cause brain damage. In 2006, he was crowned world record holder in the category of unwanted cranial ammunition acquisition. *Modesto (CA) Bee*, 26 April; *[AP]* 27 April 2012.

A WOMAN DIED AFTER DRINKING 18 PINTS (10 litres) of Coca Cola – more than 30 cans – every day for more than seven years. Natasha Marie Harris, 30, a mother of eight from Invercargill, New Zealand, began vomiting up to six times a week. Her illness was blamed on caffeine toxicity and she finally had a heart attack in February 2010. A pathologist said she probably suffered from hypokalemia, or low potassium, caused by excessive consumption of Coke and poor nutrition. She also smoked 30 cigarettes a day. *Sun*, 20 April; *Irish Independent*, 21 April; *TNT Magazine*, 23 April 2012.

THE BODY OF A FRENCHMAN WHO DIED THREE years ago was found in his Strasbourg apartment after a pigeon flew in a window and sat on his radio, turning it on so loudly that after two weeks (!) a neighbour called the police. The 78-year-old had died of natural causes, but the authorities were not alerted because his rent was paid by direct debit. *MX News (Sydney)*, 17 Feb 2012.

TEN PEOPLE, INCLUDING FOUR BROTHERS, DIED after being buried alive while illegally digging for antiquities under a house in the central Egyptian village of Arab al-Manasra, north of Luxor. Another two people were injured. *MX News (Sydney)*, 13 Mar 2012.

ZBYSZEK ZIOLA, 65, LAUNCHED A MIDNIGHT attack on moles that had burrowed into his lawn, using 15 sticks of dynamite his soldier son had stolen for him from his base. However, he failed to get clear in time and was blown to



pieces. The massive explosion woke his wife, who found his remains scattered across the lawn of their home in Zbaszynek, Poland. *Sun*, 25 Mar 2012.

A ROAD SAFETY CAMPAIGNER WAS KILLED ON the A684 through Constable Burton, North Yorkshire, the very road on which he fought to have the speed limit reduced from 60 to 30mph (96 to 48km/h). Colin Wystyrk, 66, was hit by a van days before he was due to fly to Australia for a holiday. *Midweek Sport*, 25 Jan 2012.

A DRIVER HAD A FATAL HEART ATTACK AFTER being left in shock over the cost of filling up his car. Manfred Wehner, 73, from Vilsbiburg, Germany, thought he was being charged £1.27 a litre, but when his son Stefan went to pay he was told it had risen to £1.34. *Sun*, 25 Feb 2012.

A PYGMY ELEPHANT FATALLY GORED AN Australian tourist at the remote Tabin wildlife reserve on Borneo island on 7 December 2011. It was the first known fatal attack in Malaysia's eastern Sabah state. The wild male elephant had been roaming alone around a mud volcano when Jenny O'Grady Donley, 25, a friend, and their Malaysian guide saw it while trekking near their resort. Donley, a vet, is believed to have gone within 10m (33ft) of the animal, which may have charged at her because it was alarmed by the unfamiliar humans. Pygmy elephants are unique to Borneo. *[AP]* 9 Dec 2012.

BRITAIN'S X-FILES

20. Gremlins and Black Projects

Dr DAVID CLARKE, consultant for the National Archives UFO project, summarises the highlights from the penultimate batch of Ministry of Defence documents.

This ninth collection of UFO files takes the chronology full circle, back to the decision by the Ministry in 2007 to "make UFOs history" by transferring all its remaining files to The National Archives. Of the 6,700 pages included in this tranche, almost a third are held in three files that chronicle my Freedom of Information campaign to force the MoD to release papers on key UFO incidents.¹

Now these documents are in the public domain, I can reveal the contents of my correspondence and meetings with UFO desk officer Linda Unwin and her colleagues at the MoD Main Building between 2003–6. During those years, Linda led the MoD's proactive approach to the release of UFO papers when the subject became the third most popular topic for FOI requests. A large number of those requests came from the campaign team that included fellow ufologists Joe McGonagle, Gary Anthony and Andy Roberts. In response, Linda met with colleagues from the RAF and DIS to collect the surviving UFO files held in archives. She realised that it was costly and impractical for her and her successor (the last UFO desk officer) Paul Webb to continue to respond to individual requests. The case for full disclosure had been made.

In October 2004, Joe and I met Linda and her boss Rob Lingham at the Main Building to discuss a whole range of issues and unresolved questions about the MoD's UFO policy and its plans for the release of files.² The Freedom of Information Act arrived in January of the following year and I immediately requested a copy of the MoD's file on UFO policy. In April, Linda Unwin advised defence minister Dr Lewis Moonie they should allow me to see the file, which

contained a number of documents classified as secret. She added: "Since the introduction of the Code of Practice and FOIA a large amount of information about UFOs has been released, much of it as a result of requests made by Dr Clarke. We have developed a good relationship with this researcher who takes a sensible approach to this subject... he frequently publishes well researched articles which dismiss conspiracy theories and does much to bring balance to the public debate."³

When the file arrived in September 2005, it was clear we now had evidence that a secret study of 'Unidentified Aerial Phenomena' (UAP), also known as the Condign report, had been commissioned by the MoD. The report, completed in 2000, found no evidence that UAPs posed a defence threat and allowed the Defence Intelligence Staff to discontinue their interest in the subject after 50 years (see **FT211:4–6**). The policy file that led me to discover the truth was released by The National Archives in March last year and has since been downloaded more than 250,000 times, more than any of the other files released during the four-year disclosure programme.⁴

Armed with these revelations, in September 2005 I made a FOI request for a complete copy of the Condign report itself. The files show that the MoD spent six months deliberating over how they should respond to revelations that they had spent £50,000 of public money on a UFO study despite repeated statements claiming they had no interest in the subject. One of the subsidiary findings of the study – released to the public in May

FACING, TOP LEFT: A BOAC de Havilland Comet 4 jet airliner.

FACING, TOP RIGHT: The U2 spyplane.

FACING, CENTRE: Could the science fiction story "Through the Purple Cloud" have inspired descriptions of aliens "space-napping" innocent Earthlings?

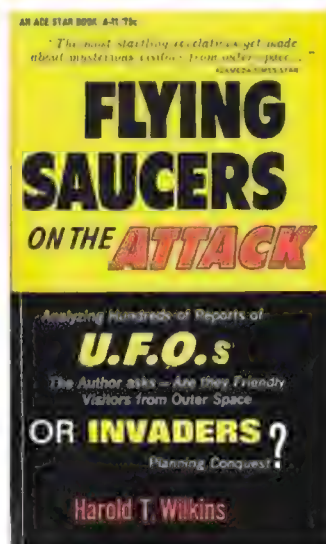
BELOW: Harold Wilkins's book *Flying Saucers On The Attack* included incidents involving UFOs and the loss of aircraft.

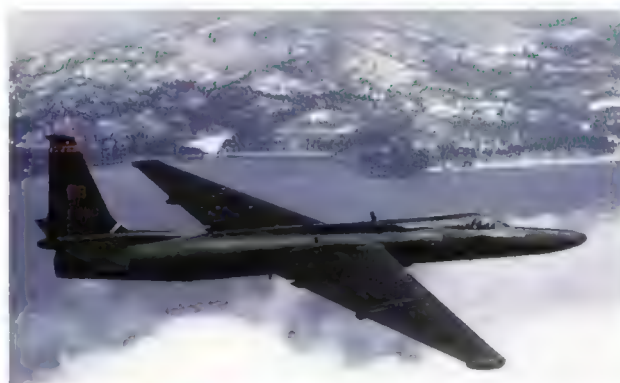
2006 – was that some UFOs (or UAPs, as DI55 preferred to call them) were rare atmospheric plasmas that had potential military applications as "novel weapons technology". The MoD was also troubled by references in volume 3 of the report to what it described as "flight safety aspects and a suggestion that past unexplained RAF fatal accidents could have been caused by the pilot being startled by the sudden appearance of an unidentified object immediately ahead of the aircraft". Unwin briefed intelligence officers this "could be interpreted as the MoD questioning the judgement of Boards of Inquiry convened to investigate these accidents" by suggesting there "may have been other factors – such as the presence of a UAP – that had not been taken into account".

Encounters of the Fatal Kind

Aircraft space-napped by aliens or destroyed by UFOs is a recurring theme in both science fiction and contemporary legend, from Captain Schaffner's disappearance in the North Sea (see **FT194:32–34**) to the loss of Flight 19 in the Bermuda Triangle portrayed in the opening scene of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. The idea can be traced back even further, to Jack Williamson's short story *Through the Purple Cloud*, published in 1931, where a portal to another dimension swallows a plane and its passengers, transporting them to a strange alien world. But the direct link between the loss of aircraft and UFO sightings first appears in Harold Wilkins's *Flying Saucers on the Attack* (1954), a book that was published in the same year as a series of disasters that befell the fleet of British de Havilland Comet jetliners.⁵ Initially, speculation about the causes included sabotage, adverse weather and explosions of vapour in empty fuel tanks. The board of inquiry chaired by Lord Cohen in October 1954 was told the authorities had received hundreds of letters from the public including some offering "suggestions that the Comets might have come into contact with something like 'flying saucers', a meteorite or a 'stratospheric gremlin'." RAE chief Sir Lionel Heald dismissed these ideas as "extremely remote".⁶

But the declassification of the Condign report revealed that at least some of those charged with the defence of the realm did take seriously the far-out idea that UAPs might have played a role in the unexplained loss of military aircraft. The accumulated evidence from Civil Aviation Authority near-miss inquiries also played on the minds of DI55 officers. One particularly well-supported case was the close encounter between a British Airways 737 and a UFO near Manchester airport in January 1995, that the airmiss working group was unable to explain.





In 1997 the Condign report's author gathered data on 100 fatal accidents involving military aircraft from the RAF's Inspectorate of Flight Safety for his study of "potential UAP hazards to aircraft". Only those accidents "where there were no survivors and where the cause was not absolutely determined" during the past 30 years were examined in detail. This was because DI55's records of UFO incidents before 1976 had been destroyed, which meant that no firm correlations between accident and UAP activity could be identified. The report also claimed there was "no firm evidence in the available reports that a RAF crew has ever encountered or evaded a low altitude UAP event", which suggests the author was unaware of evidential cases from the past such as the events at RAF Lakenheath-Bentwaters in 1956 (see **FT213:28-32**).

While none of the unexplained fatal accidents could be directly linked to UFOs, the report's author boldly stated that "the possibility exists that a fatal accident might have occurred in the past" as a result of aircrew taking sudden evasive action to avoid a UAP when flying fast and low. Although the relative risk of a collision was assessed as being lower than a bird strike, it nevertheless could not be ruled out. Accordingly, the study recommended that military aircrew should be advised that in future "no attempt should be made to out-mancoeuvre a UAP during interception". The advice to civilian crews was: "although UAP appear to be benign... pilots should be advised not to manoeuvre, other than to place astern, if possible." After the report was released, I tried to discover if any of these recommendations had been passed to the RAF or to the Civil Aviation Authority for training purposes. I was told there was no record they had been.

Black Projects

Another topic that concerned the MoD was a number of references in the Condign study to 'black project' aircraft that might enter UK airspace without the Ministry's knowledge. In November 2005, Linda Unwin warned Defence Intelligence officials that "[T]he fatal Mull of Kintyre Chinook accident [on 2 June] 1994 in which the pilots were found grossly negligent is still topical and [the UFO desk] continue to receive FOI requests

NOTES

1 DEFE 24/2043/1, DEFE 24/2061/1, DEFE 24/2090/1.

2 Minutes of the meeting can be followed in DEFE 24/2061/1.

3 DEFE 24/2090/1.

4 DEFE 24/2087/1.

5 There were 13 fatal crashes involving Comets, including two in 1954. BOAC Flight 781 crashed into the Mediterranean off the Italian island of Elba in January with the loss of all 35 on board. Three months later, a second Comet crashed into the sea near Naples with the loss of all 21 passengers and crew. The inquiry concluded that catastrophic metal fatigue was to blame.

6 A sample of the letters can be found in The National Archives file AVIA 13/1363 (Public responses to Comet disaster). One dated 2 October 1954 from John J Graham said: "I know you will play down and deny the possibility of attack by hostile spaceships but the evidence strongly suggests this unpleasant possibility."

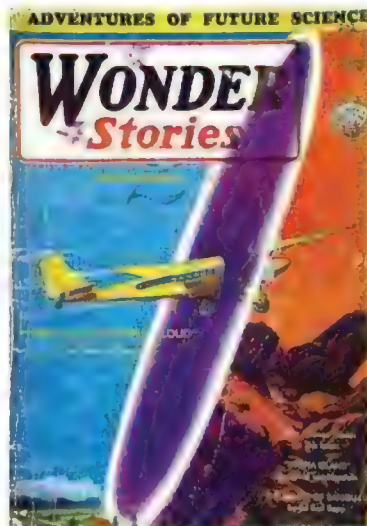
7 DEFE 24/1986/1; a new report published on 13 July 2011 cleared the Chinook pilots of any blame for the crash (**FT290:25**).

8 Andrew Thomas: "Top Secret US plane 'caused Chinook crash'", *The Register*, 10 July 2012: <http://bit.ly/Mv9QE9> (theregister.co.uk).

9 DEFE 24/2061/1.

10 DEFE 24/2080/1.

11 DEFE 24/2087/1.



and correspondence from those campaigning to clear the pilots' names." She added that "[T]he possibility of a UFO in the area was suggested by some of the campaigners as a possible cause."⁷ One speculative story suggested the Chinook could have been brought down after flying through the jet wake left by the hypersonic spyplane, Aurora, which it was claimed could achieve speeds in excess of Mach 8.⁸ From 1992-94, rumours suggested Aurora was operating from the airfield at RAF Machrihanish on the Kintyre peninsula in Scotland. A report published by the *Scotsman* in 1992 claimed air traffic controllers had reported fast-moving blips leaving the airfield and others reported hearing mysterious sonic booms. While the UK government denied any knowledge of such an aircraft, secretly it briefed ministers that DI55 would "not be surprised if it [Aurora] did exist".⁹

In another file, RAF intelligence officer Hugh Caillard tells colleagues he had "never dismissed UFOs as a figment of imagination" because of his own experience. In 1958, while flying across the USA at 40,000ft (12,000m), he saw "a brightly illuminated object greatly in excess of my altitude." He said: "[A]t the time the civilian jet airliner had not had its debut and I reported the phenomenon to an air traffic control reporting centre who accepted my observation as if it were something quite routine!"¹⁰ Perhaps even Air Commodore Caillard did not have sufficient "need to know". His account was written in January 1976, two decades before the CIA revealed that

many similar sightings reported by aircrew were of the prototype U2 spyplane. The U2 was developed in great secrecy from 1955 at Lockheed's 'Skunk Works' in Burbank, California, and could fly at an altitude of 60,000ft (18,000m) to evade Soviet radars, beyond the capabilities of most civil aircraft at that time. The early U2s tended to reflect sunlight and often appeared as "fiery objects" to aircrew below. As the project was top secret, U2 missions were made in radio silence without flight plans and frequently triggered air defence alerts in friendly countries, leading on occasions to the scramble of aircraft to intercept 'UFOs'.

Farewell UFO desk

Possibly the most revealing document in this cache of files was written by the last incumbent of the MoD's UFO desk.¹¹ Paul Webb inherited the post when Linda Unwin ended her tour of duty in 2006, and he oversaw a move from MoD Main Building to the RAF Air Command HQ at High Wycombe. Webb was transferred to other duties in December 2009 when the MoD closed its UFO hotline. A year before the X-files were closed, Webb penned a poignant three-page summary of the "daily mechanics" of his job. In his words, the very idea of a MoD UFO project "tends to suggest to the public there are Top Secret teams of specialist scientists scurrying around the country in a real-life version of *The X-Files*, [but] this is total fiction. The closest we have to the post of 'UFO Expert' is probably my own, but this has always been a generalist, non-technical post with the emphasis on correspondence with the public." He concluded by summing up the "expertise" of those who ran the MoD's UFO desk: "Whilst I have naturally built up some degree of knowledge of various UFO cases as part of my tenure [on the UFO desk], I often find the best source of information is simply to Google the Internet!" **FT**

All 25 files can be downloaded from <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ufo>s

Author biography



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BLASTS FROM THE PAST

FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

41

THE MYSTERY CROCODILE OF GRAFTON

PETER HASSALL looks back at the hunt for an elusive, not to mention out-of-place, Australian crocodile.

At first glance, the 1939 Grafton, New South Wales, crocodile case does not seem that strange. The crocodile, after all, is a native Australian animal. But there are many unexplained factors in this classic, but little known, monster scare.

On Wednesday 29 November 1939, Max Rutledge, a light train driver for the Beach Mining Company, noticed what he thought was a log beside the railway tracks near Angourie Beach, New South Wales. He stopped to check it out and the log came to life. It was a 15ft (4.5m) crocodile. Fearing it would attack the train, he left as quickly as possible. The crocodile retreated into a nearby swamp.¹

A hunt was launched, and on Friday 1 December tracks were found about 300 yards (275m) from the sighting spot. Police Constable Jackson was familiar with crocodile tracks in Queensland and was certain one was resident in the swamp. "It is expected that a spring trap, with a wire noose attached, will be built to trap the crocodile," reported the newspapers.²

What was a large crocodile doing so far out of its normal territory? The usual explanations that still crop up to explain away sightings of cryptids ranging from giant snakes to alien big cats were trotted out.

Mr AD Pegus remembered that about 13 years previously a sick circus crocodile had been brought to Yamba, about 6km (3.7 miles) north of the sighting area. It had supposedly died, but no-one had seen the body.³

Mr Longman, the director of the Queensland Museum, said the crocodile must be "an escapee from a zoo or travelling show". He also remembered that years earlier a full-grown crocodile had caused a stir when a hoaxer released it in the Brisbane River.⁴

Longman favoured the

STILL SEARCHING FOR CROCODILE



The log came to life. It was a 15ft crocodile. Fearing it would attack the train, he left as quickly as possible. The crocodile retreated into a nearby swamp.

escapee explanation, as the "Mary River was the southern limit in Queensland where crocodiles found their natural habitat."⁵ The Grafton/Angourie sighting area is about 450km (280 miles) south of that point.

The trouble with the escapee theory is that no researcher has (to date) tracked down a genuine, documented example. Loren Coleman commented regarding 1940s reports of a giant snake in Ohio, "As I have discovered many times before in my investigations of 'circus train wrecks' as the source of any given mystery animal report,

the story could never be fully tracked down."⁶

On Sunday 3 December, the searchers found tracks that "showed the imprints of four claws and footpads, four and a half inches [11.5cm] long." The tracks continued for 250 yards (230m) to the edge of an area of scrub. They also found a brownish-green scale the size of a one-shilling coin (2.35cm in diameter). Goat herders had also reported missing stock.⁷

Local aborigines near Red Rock, about 100km (60 miles) south of Angourie, said "that a 'debil debil' comes to the

ABOVE: Contemporary newspaper coverage of the croc hunt.

surface of one of the lakes there at night, and a bull-like bellowing is often heard. They believe that the spot is haunted... cattle will not go near the water, and waterfowl never alight on it. Cattle are reported to have disappeared from the neighbourhood of the lake. It is thought that the crocodile may have lived there for the past few years and recently gone north to Angourie."⁸

As in many other monster scares, witnesses came forward to report earlier sightings they had kept to themselves due to fear of ridicule:

"Mr and Mrs T Henderson state that one night about 18 months ago they were fishing on Pippie Beach when they saw the creature in the half-dark. Mr Arthur Garven, of Palmer's

Island, also saw an animal which he could not identify because of the darkness. It is also stated that Captain Fraser, who recently left Angourie after a long residence, was often kept awake at night by a booming noise from the swamp."⁹

Other familiar monster scare motifs emerged. The use of dynamite was considered and – for the sceptical-minded – a potential culprit was found: "One of the hunters heard a frantic rustling in the scrub and stood by eagerly with a gun. He shot a 5ft [1.5m] goanna [lizard] as it raced out of the cover. The carcass later adorned the door of the Yamba Hotel labelled 'Angourie Crocodile'.¹⁰

As with every monster scare I can think of over the last century, hundreds of curiosity seekers flocked to the sighting area. The police "reminded the public that it is an offence to use firearms on Sundays."¹¹

Naturalist Mr DJ Stead, "who has had considerable expertise in crocodile hunting in Malaya Sumatra", advised against the proposed spring trap with a sloped chute and bait in favour of "a rope or chain line with a shark hook and a dead chicken as bait... a leader or snood, 10ft [3m] long, consisting of about 20 strands of schnapper line, should be employed to join the hook to the rope. The separate strands would slip over the conical teeth of the crocodile when it attempted to bite through the line after it had swallowed the bait."¹²

Constable Jackson believed that the tracks found were not made by any animal local to the area.¹³ He also stated they were not faked and marks made by the crocodile's tail were also found in sandy soil.¹⁴

Despite (or perhaps because of) the growing belief that the crocodile had moved from the area, everybody still wanted to get in on the act. Mr Wingfield



Constable Jackson believed that the tracks found were not made by any animal local to the area. He stated they were not faked and tail-marks were found.

and Mr Graham Pratten, two members of the State Parliament, joined the hunt.¹⁵ Even the Army got involved: "Sections of the 15th Light Horse, in camp at Grafton, will spend five days in military manoeuvres in 'crocodile country' between Red Rock and Yamba. It is reported that they will make maps of waterholes, swamps and creeks, so there may be some unofficial crocodile hunting."¹⁶

Meanwhile, Mr JR Kinghorn, a zoologist at the Australian Museum, was examining the scale and plaster cast of a print sent to him. He was certain the scale was from either a crocodile or an alligator (the latter are not native to Australia) but was less certain of the cast: "It is possible that a northern crocodile would stray down to the Clarence River... but it is not probable. I think that we may be able to get a cast of a footprint of a crocodile at Taronga Park to compare it with the one we have received from the Clarence. Before I am convinced that the print is that of a crocodile

I would like to see the actual footprint itself or photographs of the footprints *in situ*."¹⁷

However, he estimated that if "as is apparently the case, the plaster impress is that of the left-hand paw, or foot, of a crocodile, then the animal would be about 12ft [3.7m] long."¹⁸

With the continued lack of sightings, doubt set in. The creature had "evaded every human eye except the startled orb of the engine-driver who originally saw it... no authentic representative of the species, outside a zoo, has been discovered south of the Fitzroy River, in Queensland – several hundred miles north... Whether the visitation, if sufficiently prolonged, will encourage an influx of tourists and big-game hunters to the district remains to be demonstrated. The Loch Ness Monster, which cultivated the quality of invisibility to such a degree as rarely to be seen in more than three places at once, proved, for example, a veritable treasure to the local Scottish inhabitants."¹⁹

LEFT: Mr RJ Kinghorn, a zoologist at the Australian Museum, examining a plaster cast of a footprint.

Mr Johnson, a caretaker for the Beach Mining Company, became an eyewitness on the night of 13 December. Snorting and bellowing noises woke him and he barricaded the doors of his hut, situated three miles (4.8km) from where the tracks were found.²⁰

In the first week of January 1940, a reporter joined a hunting party and was shown "the impression of a long body in the flattened grass. Measuring the full length of the curves it was more than 20ft [6m] long. But whether it was a single impression or the result of considerable movement on the reptile's part we did not know."²¹

A week later, there was a surprising new development. A second set of tracks, of a different size to the originals, was found near a rubbish dump at a gold course. A Mr Kirke also found "many fresh tracks through grass and reeds".²²

And there the mystery abruptly and inconclusively ended – until 15 months later when a final set of tracks and tail marks were found by two Maclean residents near Shelley Beach, about 100km (60 miles) south of Angourie.²³

After April 1941, the only mention of the Grafton/Angourie crocodile was in a July 1947 article in which Professor H Tasman Lovell dismissed the current craze for flying saucers as an optical illusion – "so were the Loch Ness Monster, the Yengarie lion, and the Grafton crocodile. If people expect to see something, then imagination often adds to what they actually see."²⁴

Imagination does not explain the physical traces, and I cannot help but wonder if the out-of-place croc will rear its head again one day.

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THE SKY

Reports of strange things seen in our skies have long been a source of puzzled speculation. **SCOTT DESCHAINE** asks whether the answer could be as simple, yet wondrous, as life itself. Are many UFOs actually atmospheric creatures? Is it time for a new science of aerial life?

"It seems no more incredible that up in the seemingly unoccupied sky there should be hosts of living things than that the seeming blank of the ocean should swarm with life."
— Charles Fort, *NEW LANDS*

We live at the bottom of an ocean of air. The atmosphere that surrounds us contains all the resources needed to support life. Tons of water in many forms move through the sky at all levels. Minerals drift and drop in from space and swirl up from surface soil. Energy constantly crackles around the globe.

Our atmosphere is a habitat.

In 1988, a young astronomy buff saw a weird object pulsing through the London sky. She alerted police, who also saw the flying object, and described it as a "jellyfish".¹

Earth's liquid oceans teem with more life than we can imagine. A teaspoonful of ocean water may contain more than one million bacteria and one hundred million viruses. Some of Earth's biggest and fastest animals live in the seas.

The atmosphere has five million times the volume of the ocean.

There is no hard line between sky and water – rather an interface of constant exchange. Sky, soil, and sea are all part of one system.²

What if a wide range of creatures moves through the sky for part of their lives?

We might see a huge variety of objects at all levels of the atmosphere: objects like UFOs, mystery lights, ball lightning, earthquake lights, and transient luminous events. The number and variety of unexplained atmospheric phenomena surpass our current comprehension.

In Illinois in 1963, a glowing object followed a young man and his date as they drove to her parents' house. They ran inside. Her parents saw the object, and then it disappeared. When the man left to

IN 1988, A YOUNG ASTRONOMY STUDENT SAW A WEIRD OBJECT PULSING THROUGH THE LONDON SKY

drive home, it reappeared. Later, his terrified parents watched him dash from the car as the object hovered overhead. It had followed him for almost an hour.³

From our vantage point on Earth's surface, we have a limited view of the atmosphere. We've been reaching tentatively into the sky for just some 230 years – since hot air ballooning began.

Our own recent history of technological flight has caused many to interpret what we call 'UFOs' as air- or space-borne craft. Others say UFOs are optical illusions or meteorological phenomena. The answer to the UFO question may, of course, turn out to be "All Of The Above".

Yet a strong body of evidence suggests another possibility: a wide variety of aerial creatures – a biology of the skies.

UFO historians are familiar with Kenneth Arnold's seminal 1947 "flying saucer" sighting. Arnold studied UFOs for the rest of his life, collecting numerous stories from pilots. He concluded that UFOs are living things, fauna of the atmosphere.⁴

One pilot told Arnold that he was approached in flight by what he called a "rayfish" larger than his plane. The edges of its wings rippled like those of a marine ray.⁵

The US Air Force, in its first study of

UFOs in 1949, said that "many acted more like animals than anything else."⁶

TEN PARALLELS BETWEEN UFOs AND MARINE INVERTEBRATES

Marine invertebrates are some of the largest, most numerous, and most amazing animals on Earth. Many are ideally suited to moving around in a fluid habitat.

Invertebrates are prolific and adaptive. Without a limiting skeleton, they can grow to huge sizes. In 1870, a jellyfish with 120ft (37m)-long tentacles washed ashore in Massachusetts Bay – it dwarfed a blue whale. Giant squid swim freely away from our fastest submarines.

In 1973, a giant jellyfish nearly sank the steamer *Kuranda* in the Indian Ocean. The creature's gelatinous body covered the decks, two feet deep. One sailor was stung to death by huge lashing tentacles.⁷

Invertebrates use both sexual and asexual reproduction, for propagation in many conditions. Some can shrink and revert to younger forms – a kind of immortality.

Nature is like a playful composer, spinning endless variations of successful themes.

Here are 10 ways UFOs and other unexplained aerial phenomena resemble marine invertebrates:

1. APPEARANCE

UFOs have been reported in countless numbers, varieties, and sizes – from tiny to enormous. Day and night sightings seem to describe two common shapes – saucers and rockets or cigars.

Saucer-shaped jellyfish and rocket-shaped squid are some of the most successful marine invertebrates.

People report UFOs that resemble "parachutes", "ice cream cones" and "shuttlecocks". Witness drawings show organic-looking objects. Pilots and police describe "giant flying jellyfish".

For two nights in 1891, residents of

IS ALIVE





'Jellyfish' UFO: Var, France, 1974

*Crawfordsville, Indiana, watched a bellowing, pulsing, wheezing monster in the sky above their town. Its glowing red "eye" flashed, as it seemed to struggle. All who watched it felt it was alive.*⁸

What about tentacles? Witnesses describe "trailing appendages", "arms", "feelers" and "antennae".

Many UFO witnesses report translucent or fuzzy edges around a saucer shape. Marine invertebrates are composed mainly of the medium in which they live. Perhaps aerial invertebrates are mainly gas and water vapour.

Many jellyfish have a dense, saucer-shaped ring of muscle in the centre of a gelatinous body. This pulses to propel the animal. In bright light, this saucer shape may be all that is visible to us.

Compare many quality UFO photographs with this invertebrate anatomy. Even mechanical-looking objects have parallels with nature's intricate designs.

At night, they show an amazing variety of lights.

2 BIOLUMINESCENCE

Marine invertebrates use a variety of luminescence methods. Some harbour symbiotic glowing bacteria. Some generate chemical reactions for brilliant flashes. They are masters of living light.

They show displays of light beyond what we can see or even perceive. Some UFO witnesses say they can't even describe the colours they have seen.

UFOs use lights, millions of powerful lights, to hunt, attract, warn, and scare – like bioluminescent creatures of the sea.

In 1975, a former policeman drove his car



Bioluminescent UFO: Pennsylvania, 1952

*on the road to a French village. A strange, glowing, disc-shaped object glided across the field toward him. Suddenly, it reared up, flashing a blinding light, "brighter than the sun!". The object latched onto and tried to lift his car. He went off the road, and the object left. Luckily, though shaken, he escaped.*⁹

Bioluminescence may help explain how some UFOs seem to disappear: they just turn off the lights.

3 MOVEMENT

Jellyfish are living helicopters. They create their own fluid vortices to ride.¹⁰

Squid are living jets. They can rocket around, hover, and control their buoyancy.

These two broad categories of life are perfectly adapted for fluid environments. In the fluid atmosphere, similarly shaped UFOs perform similar amazing movements.

They change shape as they move. Some expand and contract.

Many descend in a "falling leaf" motion typical of jellyfish.

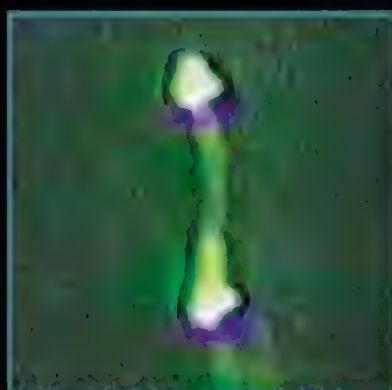
They hover almost motionlessly, then pulse and soar away with a whoosh.

UFOs move like marine organisms.

4 INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR

Many witnesses say UFOs seem to act with purpose.

Some show curiosity about people and vehicles. Many seem to show intelligence.



Glowing object splits in two: Florida, undated

*In 1976, a professional camera plane flew alongside the streamlined Concorde to film a commercial. Suddenly, a pulsing blob raced up to the Concorde. It flew alongside it for a few moments, seeming to peer into the windows. Then it raced effortlessly away.*¹¹

Perhaps, instead of having intelligent pilots, the creatures themselves are intelligent; perhaps more intelligent than we can imagine.

*In 1956, an Air Force plane flew over the north Atlantic. The crew saw what looked like a small, lighted island in the water below, where no islands were known. They watched in shock as the whole object, three times bigger than their aircraft, rose out of the water, then easily paced and flew around their plane for miles.*¹²

They act individually, and in groups.



A swarm of UFOs: Mexico, 2001

5 GROUP BEHAVIOUR

Like marine invertebrates, UFOs seem to appear in groups and interact with each other. Photographs and video seem to show large groups of lifelike objects in the sky. Some seem to chase, some to work together, and some to court one another.

*For three days in 1950, an armada of unexplained flying objects passed through the sky over Farmington, New Mexico. Thousands of objects seemed to play and fight with each other as they passed overhead. Air Force investigators scoured the town for every picture taken by residents. One resident who took a picture was out of town, so his picture survives. It shows dozens of disc-shaped objects in various shapes, as if in movement.*¹³

6 UFO CONCENTRATIONS

UFOs often appear in "waves", "flaps", and "armadas", rapidly rising in number. This resembles invertebrate populations that blossom when living conditions turn favourable.

UFO sightings sometimes occur in cycles, sometimes seasonally.

UFO reports describe many apparent forms of reproduction, including budding, splitting, and dropping eggs.

7 FEEDING AND HUNTING

Some jellyfish are farmers, hosting photosynthetic algae.

However, most jellyfish and squid are high-level predators that use a variety of hunting techniques.

UFOs sometimes seem to attack each other, targeting similar or different UFOs.

They also seem to attack animals.

Thousands of reports of cattle mutilations describe strange lights hovering over the fields of the victims. Dead animals and even people are found inexplicably in the tops of tall trees.

UFOs attack vehicles. Some have followed cars for miles, bumping against them, flashing bright lights.

In 1988, a mother and her three sons drove frantically along an Australian desert highway. A glowing object landed with a thump on top of their moving car. It whooshed a foul smell, like decomposing flesh. The mother reached out her window and touched its spongy body. Then the object lifted their car right off the ground! Luckily for the family,

it dropped the car, bursting a tire.¹⁴

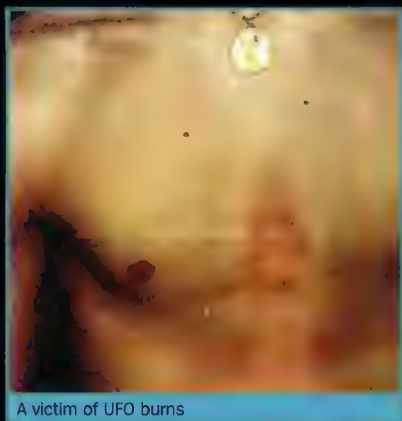
Some have attacked and destroyed planes.

In 1978, a young Australian pilot in his small plane above the Tasmanian Strait radioed air controllers that the UFO seemed to be toying with him. It raced back and forth, and then hovered right above him. Just before his radio went silent, he said, "It is hovering... and it's not an aircraft!"¹⁵

Tales of hunting UFOs come from the lucky witnesses who got away. Sometimes people don't escape unscathed.

8. EFFECTS ON HUMANS

Invertebrates hunt with some of the strongest neurotoxins and digestive compounds known. They may eject toxins into their fluid environments, or they may inject directly into their prey, using millions of stingers on thousands of tentacles. Fine jellyfish tentacles can extend many times



A victim of UFO burns

farther than the animal's main body. One species's tentacles can cover a basketball court. People show a range of symptoms when exposed to invertebrate toxins, depending on the organism and the extent of the exposure.

Mild physical symptoms:

- Eye irritation and damage
- Reddening and swelling of skin

More severe physical symptoms:

- Blistering and peeling of skin
- Heart damage, including collapse and arrest
- Lung damage and breathing problems
- Nausea and vomiting
- Kidney damage
- Muscle damage, including destruction of skeletal muscles
- Destruction of red blood cells

Neurological symptoms:

- Disruption of autonomic nervous system
- Loss of coordination
- Tingling or numbness
- Paralysis
- Headache
- Agitation and panic
- Seizures
- Stupor or coma
- Neuropsychiatric disturbances such as

depression, apathy, and hallucinations

Many UFO witnesses experience physical and psychological effects consistent with exposure to similar toxins. Some jellyfish and UFO victims describe bolts or rays that stun or leave them senseless, sometimes even from a distance.

In 1946, a glowing white object enveloped a Brazilian man who was walking home. He escaped and ran inside. He fell stricken, his nerves frozen, his body falling apart as if being digested. He soon died, unaware of pain, fully conscious to the end.¹⁶

A group of medical professionals studied short and long-term physical and psychological effects of UFO exposure. They noted the following effects were found repeatedly:

Mild physical symptoms:

- Eye irritation and damage
- Reddening and swelling of skin

More severe physical symptoms:

- Blistering and peeling of skin
- Chest pains, hypertension
- Nausea and vomiting
- Muscle damage, including destruction of skeletal muscles
- Destruction of red blood cells

Neurological symptoms:

- Loss of coordination
- Tingling or numbness
- Paralysis
- Headache
- Agitation and panic
- Stupor or coma
- Neuropsychiatric disturbances such as depression, apathy, and hallucinations¹⁷

UFO encounters have killed and injured many people. Some manage to escape, but never fully recover. Beware UFOs! If you see them, do not approach! Their bright lights are meant to attract, but their toxins may affect you, even at a distance.

9. PHYSICAL TRACES AND TRACKS

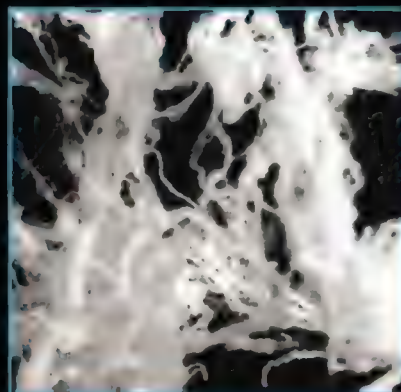
Swarms of sky organisms should leave physical evidence of their bodies and movement. A variety of physical evidence seems to show such tracks and traces.

Organic gelatinous material regularly falls and showers the planet. "Glowing meteors" and "rot of the stars" describe falling, glowing blobs. In 1994, countless gelatinous blobs, seemingly biological in origin, rained upon a small town in Washington State, followed by sickness among people and animals.¹⁸

Sometimes what may be excretions drop from the sky – body parts, flakes of flesh, and rains of blood.

Some UFOs shed strange filaments called "angel hair". This material visually resembles jellyfish tentacles. It usually sublimates quickly. Chemical analysis of a few samples has detected the same minerals found in marine jellyfish.¹⁹

Sometimes what may be entire bodies fall.



'Angel hair' resembles the tendrils of a jellyfish

In 1950, two Philadelphia policemen watched a glowing purple light fall from the sky into a vacant lot. They saw a pulsing gelatinous disc, about 6ft (1.8m) across. They felt it was alive. Two other policemen came. They watched the disc for 40 minutes until it dissolved and completely disappeared.²⁰

Huge flying bodies that pulse to propel themselves on vortices of air might make tracks in vegetation.

From saucer nests to crop circles, we see imprints in vegetation and soil caused by the rest and movement of circular objects. Could flying rings of muscle leave such imprints with their powerful vortices?

10. AERIAL HABITATS

The atmosphere is an incredibly varied habitat. Evidence of aerial life seems to be found in likely resource-rich habitats in the sky, at almost every level.

UFOs are reported entering, leaving, and spending time around water. John Keel produced a map of UFO sightings during a bizarre flap in 1966, showing how they concentrated around lakes and rivers.²¹

If the atmosphere is like the ocean, crevices in its bottom might provide shelter for organisms. We find "mystery lights", "spook lights", and "ghost lights" near caves, springs, faults, and other geological features.

When looking for life, we look at habitat edges.

At these edges, where different habitats come together, we are more likely to find living things. They have access to resources from both habitats. For example, a bird



Light form with tail, photographed at Marfa, Texas



Photo from shuttle mission STS-115, 20006

near the edge of field and forest can feed in the field and then shelter in the forest.

Where do we find habitat edges in the sky?

At any time, about 200 giant thunderstorms rumble around our planet. Their enormous, densely rich clouds are full of water, minerals, and energy.

What do we see when we look at the edge where clear sky meets thunderstorm?

Scientists have recently discovered what they call "sprites" – giant luminous phenomena above the tops of thunderstorms. Scientists say some look like giant "jellyfish", 35 miles (55km) high or more.²² They've found a variety of other transient luminous events, "an entirely new aerial bestiary".²³

At first, scientists thought sprites were just a new form of lightning. But they've found that the same sprites persist for over 30 minutes.

Giant invisible sprites produce deep infrasound²⁴ and immense gravity waves,²⁵ like enormous objects pulsing and swimming in the atmosphere.

Sprites appear in groups and seem to interact with each other. Scientists are finding that sprites are more numerous than they first expected.

If organisms, from tiny to enormous, really do move in our atmosphere, wouldn't astronauts have seen evidence of them?

They have – from almost the first missions to the present. Some of the best evidence comes from NASA's pioneering space flights.

During John Glenn's first Earth orbit in 1962, he approached sunrise and entered a cloud of thousands of glowing particles. He said they looked like fireflies, changed direction, and proved the "biggest surprise of the flight".²⁶

Other astronauts like Gordon Cooper and James McDivitt saw unusual objects moving in the atmosphere.

Low light cameras aboard some space shuttle flights captured amazing evidence. In 1991, pilots aboard shuttle mission STS-48 recorded objects pulsing and moving in the atmosphere. Some reacted to a flash and shot off incredibly fast.²⁷

Shuttle mission STS-80 in 1996 orbited above a giant storm as the crew watched with low light cameras. They saw an amazing variety of pulsing, swimming objects, including a giant glowing sprite-like disc that emerged from the clouds.²⁸

In 1996, mission STS-75 provided an important, perhaps historic, piece of scientific evidence. A 12-mile (19km)-long tethered satellite broke from the shuttle and floated away. The shuttle watched. About 100 miles (160km) away, the tether approached sunrise. Suddenly, a swarm of pulsing discs gathered around the tether. Some moved behind the tether, indicating that they were at least 10 miles (16km) across.²⁹

EXTRATERRESTRIAL JELLYFISH?

Less than 400 years ago, Anton van Leeuwenhoek, the Dutch pioneer of microscope research, peered into tiny glass lenses and found a world no one had ever suspected, with creatures smaller than had ever been imagined. The STS-75 Tether Incident may offer a groundbreaking glimpse at the other end of the spectrum of life, with creatures larger than ever imagined.

If various organisms move through our skies, there is urgent need to study them.

The first concern is the safety of planes, space vehicles, and people on the surface.

In 1959, pilots and witnesses on the ground in Louisiana saw a giant object they said looked like a red mushroom cloud, a mile (1.6km) high. Some said it shot or flashed something at the commercial airliner. The airliner was torn to pieces. Investigators found incredible damage, like no other crash they had ever seen.³⁰

The careers and mental health of some UFO witnesses have suffered from their encounters. They may benefit from knowing that they saw amazing but entirely natural phenomena.

Prompt and proper treatment of exposed witnesses may mitigate debilitating physical and psychological effects

from harmful toxins.

This new perspective may offer new insight into other puzzling phenomena, for instance:

FRESHWATER JELLYFISH

How do millions of jellyfish sometimes appear in bodies of fresh water around the world where they have never been seen before? Do they reach remote ponds and lakes by somehow travelling through the air at some part of their life cycles?

EARTHQUAKE LIGHTS

Faults in the Earth's surface may provide perfect habitat niches. People have reported a range of animated lights near earthquakes. Perhaps, like other animals, aerial creatures may become active when they sense an earthquake.

GIANT WHEELS OF LIGHT

Sailors report giant luminescent lights in the Indian Ocean, near where a giant jellyfish almost sank a steamer in 1973. Bands of light, sometimes miles long, rotate under and across the water. Perhaps these are actually invertebrate giants.

FALLS OF FISH

Jellyfish sometimes provide living islands for other animals. They may be an ecosystem unto themselves for hundreds of fish, snails, or other aquatic creatures. If an aquatic invertebrate metamorphoses into an atmospheric one, it might purge much of its liquid body contents, including any symbiotic organisms.

The hypothesis suggests many answers, but obviously raises some new dilemmas.

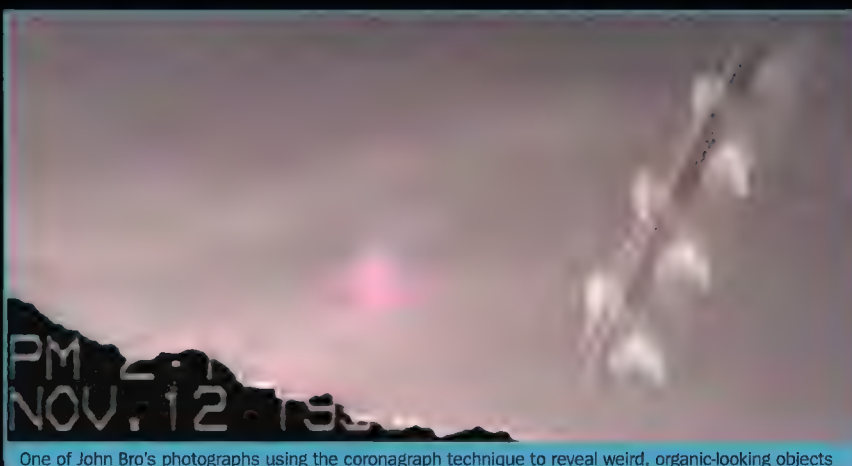
Maybe we're not at the top of the food chain, as we like to think. That's both humbling and disconcerting.

Some sources estimate that over 2,000 people go missing every day in the United States alone. No one can say how many abandoned vehicles are found. Each year, planes inexplicably crash and some disappear. Consider reports of saucers laden with occupants – do they have pilots... or full bellies?

Swarms of huge jellyfish clog industrial



Unusual cloud formation or aerial life-form?: Wyborg, Denmark, 1974



One of John Bro's photographs using the coronagraph technique to reveal weird, organic-looking objects

water intakes around the world. Could sky organisms similarly bloom? Could aerial "red tides" have caused past mass extinctions? Should we prepare for such events, and if so, how? Do they affect our weather? Are they a vital part of our habitat; are we of theirs?

A NEW SCIENCE OF AERIAL LIFE

Carl Sagan speculated that giant floating organisms like jellyfish might live on Jupiter.³² Arthur C Clarke proposed that giant jellyfish might swim on Jupiter's moon, Europa.³³

In 1994, astronomers witnessed a sight never before seen by human eyes. About 20 pieces of comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 slammed into Jupiter. One piece hit with more force than the Earth's entire nuclear arsenal, shooting tons of debris into space.

If hardy jellyfish eggs can travel through sky, over land, to freshwater ponds, can

they travel across space, to the warm, moist atmosphere of Earth?

Do weird gelatinous life forms live in the fluid atmospheres of other planets?

Perhaps they're here, now...

Astrobiologists sample the Earth's upper atmosphere, trying to detect viruses and bacteria, evidence of panspermia – the spread of life across the Universe. Maybe they'll also find invertebrate eggs.

This is just an introduction to the idea and a small sample of evidence. There is much more available for review, including multiple witness sightings and physical or visual evidence.

However, the best – indeed the only – way to test the hypothesis is to carry out further study.

A science of aerobiology can study life in the atmosphere. More inclusively, planetary biology can study life within our planet's complex system and beyond.

There are many avenues for further study. If we use the right technology, it may just be a matter of looking in the right places.

Cameras can expand our range of perception into ultraviolet and infra-red spectra. Some detect high and low levels of light that we can't perceive. Some can speed up and slow down time to reveal hidden events.

Even simple tools can help reveal the sky. A coronagraph blocks the Sun's direct light while allowing views of the corona. One man simply put a camera under the edge of a roof. The Sun's bright light revealed huge, organic-looking objects.³⁴

We can use balloons, planes, satellites, and ground-based observation. We can examine likely atmospheric habitat edges: geological crevices, skies near clouds and thunderstorms, and the always-moving edge between night and day.

Imagine what's up there, still unseen.

The concept is simple, but the implications are huge.

Are we ready? **FT**

Dedicated to the memory of William Corliss.

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SCOTT DESCHAINE is head of Custom Comic Services and Discovery Comics, and via Glow Film he is helping to develop a television programme that will use the latest technology to seek new life in previously unexplored atmospheric habitats.

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HAUNTED BY DURRELL'S DREAMS

In the year of Lawrence Durrell's centenary, PAUL DEVEREUX retraces the writer's footsteps to two of the key healing sites of the ancient Mediterranean world and asks whether the dreams of those long since dead can take on a life of their own and linger into the present...

The ancient practice of "temple sleep" involved people sleeping at special temples or venerated places seeking dreams for divination or healing purposes. Such dream-seeking goes back thousands of years in many cultures worldwide, and I have been particularly interested in the ancient Greek Asklepieia,¹ temples dedicated to the healing god, Asklepios, son of Apollo, that were specifically built for people to seek healing dreams. Some years ago, knowing of this interest, my esteemed *FT* colleague Alan Murdie handed me a couple of pages from an old magazine he had chanced upon. Somewhat yellowed with age, the sheets were from a 1947 edition of the now-defunct BBC magazine *The Listener*, and contained an article by the late novelist, dramatist and poet Lawrence Durrell,² in which he made some thought-provoking – let us say fortein – comments about his visits to two of the leading Asklepieia – the one at Epidaurus on mainland Greece, and the other on the Greek island of Kos in the Aegean Sea close to the Turkish coast. I reached Epidaurus quite early on in my travels, but because of the Durrell article I determined to visit the Kos temple too, an aim I finally achieved in 2011. Here is an account of both places, and what happened when Durrell – and, much later, I – visited them.

Founded in the fifth century BC and reaching its zenith in the following centuries, Epidaurus in the Peloponnese became what was arguably the prominent

ASKLEPIOS WAS
SAID TO HAVE BEEN
SUCKLED BY A GOAT
AND BROUGHT UP
BY THE CENTAUR
CHIRON

Greek dream temple, and was both a religious centre and a fashionable spa. Its site nestles beneath Mount Velanidhia (the ancient Mount Tittihion) where Asklepios was said to have been suckled by a goat, guarded by a dog, and brought up by the centaur Chiron, who taught the child the healing power of herbs. Although now in a fairly ruined state, Epidaurus in its heyday was a large complex comprising Doric temple, baths, a theatre and stadium, a mysterious circular structure known as the Tholos, hotel-like buildings, and the Enkoimeterion, the building containing the dream cells or *abaton*s where temple sleep actually took place.

Anyone seeking healing dreams at Epidaurus, or at any Asklepieion, would undergo a variety of spiritual and physical purifications in which water figured prominently. At the Corinth Asklepieion, for example, water was brought from a special source over 14 miles (23km) distant even though there were other springs at hand which were also used. (It's interesting to note that this imported water at Corinth has been found to be radioactive, as is sometimes the case at other ancient sacred spas, that at Bath in England being a prime example.) At Epidaurus, the dream cells were actually placed over a well that was sacred long before the Asklepieion was built. There was psychological preparation of patients as well, and Epidaurus, like other Asklepieions, was furnished with statues depicting Asklepios and other members of his



Laurence Durrell



ABOVE: The ruinous temple sleep area of the Epidaurus Asklepieion. Mount Velanidhia (Tithion) is in the background.
 LEFT: A Roman mosaic in Kos Museum depicts Asklepios (centre) arriving on the island, with Hippocrates at left, shown in teaching position.
 BELOW LEFT: Surviving pillars of the ancient temple of Apollo on the second, middle, terrace of the Kos Asklepieion.
 BELOW: Asklepios with serpent-entwined staff.



divine family (such as his daughter, Hygeia (right), goddess of what we today would call preventative medicine), along with terracotta plaques of body parts and testimonial messages left by previous visitors who had seemingly experienced successful cures. Harmless snakes were allowed free rein within an Asklepieion, symbolically relating to the god's emblem of a snake entwined around a staff. The snakes would be used to lick the afflicted part of a patient visiting the temple for healing, and temple assistants known as *therapeutes* might also apply ointments. Eventually, the person seeking the healing dream would be given an infusion of herbs, possibly psychoactive or soporific in nature, and then enter a dream cell and sleep on a stone bed, hoping Asklepios or a symbol representing him would appear in a dream. Therapeutes would later interpret supplicants' dreams for them, advising on the course of treatment indicated by the dream imagery.

Contemporary records from the Greek dream temples tell of a range of cures, some seemingly miraculous. At Epidaurus, one patient, Heraieus, was described as not having a hair on his head "but a great deal on his chin". Tired of being laughed at, he slept in the temple. An inscription states: "And the god, anointing his head with a drug, made him grow hair." Another inscription at the temple tells of a man who had an abdominal abscess. In "a vision", Asklepios "cut him open, rid him of the abscess, and then stitched him up again... Straightaway he departed cured". It noted that the floor of the abaton "was covered in blood", a realistic comment that suggests actual surgery took place while the patient was in a drugged stupor. Cures seem to have been a mix of surgery, placebo and suggestion, plus herbal medicine and life-style advice.

When Lawrence Durrell first visited Epidaurus in 1939, his sense was that the whole area held an aura of sanctity – there was "something at once intimate and healing about it". But the Greek curator at the complex told the writer that he had succeeded in working a transfer to the site at Mycenæ. Durrell wanted to know why the man should want to leave this green and peaceful place in favour of the craggy citadel. "I can't bear the dreams we have in this valley," the curator explained.

"What dreams?" Durrell queried.

"Everybody in this valley has dreams," the man replied. "Some people don't mind, but as for me, I'm off." He went on to comment that the dreams frequently contained the figure of a man with an Assyrian-looking visage, with dense ringlets falling down onto his shoulders. He looked like a figure depicted in a fresco in the Epidaurus museum – an image of old Asklepios himself, Durrell suspected. But surely that was to be expected, considering that the curator spent his days in Epidaurus? "Why should my two kids dream about him when they have never set foot in the museum?" the Greek retorted. "If you don't believe me, ask any of the peasants who live in this



"THE PEASANTS
ALL HAVE DREAMS
THE VALLEY IS
FULL OF DREAMS"

valley. They all have dreams. The valley is full of dreams."

Durrell wondered if the thousands of dreams experienced at Epidaurus over its centuries of activity had somehow, through some currently unknown means, lingered on. At the time, this was just a wild, passing thought but several years later, when he visited Kos, Durrell was prompted to consider the matter again.

The father of modern medicine, Hippocrates – a real person and not a god – was born on the small island of Kos c.460 BC. There was already a circle of physicians on Kos, and his father and grandfather were *Asklepiades* – physician-priests in the cult of Asklepios which seems to have originated in Thessaly, northern Greece. Although Asklepiades traditionally claimed to be descendants of Asklepios himself, Hippocrates never engaged with such notions (though some later commentators conferred a divine status on him), and he ultimately came to teach medicine

outside the self-acclaimed "family circle" of Asklepiades. Nevertheless, he was born into the medical environment of his time and made great use of it, learning all there was to know from some of the best contemporary teachers available and, importantly, coming to analyse and classify the wide range of diseases suffered by the people coming to various Asklepieia; he travelled to mainland Greece, especially to Thessaly, to Egypt and elsewhere. Eventually, he was to lay down new, objective guidelines for medicine, removing it from the spheres of religion and superstition. "Every disease has its nature and its cause," he stressed, and included environmental, dietary and lifestyle factors in treatment. He also placed much importance on the ethics and professional discipline of physicians – the Hippocratic Oath, is, of course, acknowledged to this day. Although the precise date of Hippocrates's death is not known, he certainly lived to an advanced age, because he did not die until around the middle of the 4th century BC. He established his school of medicine on Kos, and the Asklepieion, built after his death, adopted some of its principles.

The Asklepieion is located in the foothills of Mount Dikaio, where a sacred grove to Apollo formerly existed, and is built in three tiers or terraces that seat it harmoniously in the landscape. The site was considered to offer a perfect balance of air, land and water. The temple was active and important throughout much of the Hellenistic era (323–146 BC), and features within its precinct today derive from different time periods. Much of the original Asklepieion has disappeared due to earthquakes and its use as a handy source of stones by the Knights of St John, but an overall impression of the place can still be obtained. Until relatively recently, it was fed by springs on the mountain providing waters containing iron, sulphur, calcium, and carbonic acid. Not only was water important from a purification point of view, hydrotherapy was a key part of the Asklepieion's range of treatments and was particularly focused on the first, lower, terrace where it is believed the school of medicine was situated. On the second, or middle, terrace there are the ruins of various small temples, including the oldest one on the site dedicated to Asklepios, and the abatons where temple sleep took place. On the top terrace, a great temple of Asklepios was constructed in the 2nd century BC.

In 1945, immediately after World War II, Lawrence Durrell visited Kos. He encountered two British soldiers who were clearing up scattered German and Italian ordnance. They were camped in a bell tent near the Asklepieion. Durrell chatted with the men, who asked him if he knew anything about the temple. He told them about the Asklepios cult, and, recalling his conversation with the curator at Epidaurus years before, casually asked them if they had noticed anything unusual about their dreams. The



BOTH PIX: PAUL DEVEREUX

ABOVE LEFT: What remains of the Temple of Asklepios on the second terrace of the Kos Asklepieion. It is one of the oldest features within the temple's precinct.

ABOVE RIGHT: A sleep cell or *abaton* on the second terrace of the Kos Asklepieion.

question made the soldiers stare at each other in surprise. Yes! They had moved their tent out of their initial camping spot within the temple precinct precisely because they had experienced disturbing dreams. "Was it possible, I found myself wondering again, that dreams do not disappear?" Durrell wrote. "And especially in a place like this which must have been charged with hundreds of thousands of dreams?"

Durrell admitted that he had always "longed to know more" about the function of dreams in the ancient temple sleep practice, and had wanted to experiment at Epidaurus by sleeping alone within the temple for a month and recording his dreams there. Unfortunately, the war had intervened and he never got round to carrying out the experiment. But now, at Kos, he had another chance. "I resolved there and then to visit the Aesculapium [*sic*] and sleep in the suppliant's corner of the temple; and to record any dreams I might have in a notebook." He, somewhat frustratingly, claimed in the *Listener* article that his results were not complete and he would need to visit the island again to do more work, so he was currently unable to give the results of his "series of experiments". Warning that it might be years until he could get round to doing more work at Kos, he tantalisingly wrote: "But the material I have to date is interesting enough to suggest that dreams do perhaps live on in these ancient centres of healing, and can tell one things of great esoteric significance." (It was to be many decades later when the Dragon Project conducted something a little like Durrell's idea at British prehistoric sites – see FT178:30–35.)

To modern mainstream thinking, the idea that dreams could haunt a physical locale seems laughable – and Durrell admitted he was laughed at for his idea. Our culture makes us draw distinct boundaries between inner worlds of mind and the external material world. Possibly, just possibly, that worldview is not quite correct. We are

now familiar with biologist Rupert Sheldrake's controversial theory of "morphic resonance" which states that a person or any individual organism is informed by a memory field belonging to the species as a whole. Is it at all feasible that *places* could also have "memory fields"? To follow Durrell's idea, could it possibly be the case that the dreaming mind, plumbing other realms of the psyche than those in which the waking mind operates, is able to pick up transpersonal information, especially at locations where intensive, purposeful inner experience took place over very long periods – perhaps not picking up ancient dreams as such, but responding to a resonance, a *dream resonance*, with which such places as Asklepieia are "charged" (to use Durrell's term)? And could it be that the strong physical association of all these dream temples with subterranean springs and reservoirs of water, some of them radioactive, is in some mysterious way a factor in sustaining that resonance?

I had been following in Durrell's footsteps in visiting these two Asklepieia, and very consciously so in the case of Kos. I had been trying to get there for years, yet could never manage it for one reason or another. An attempt earlier in 2011 had been thwarted at the very last moment by a Greek ferry strike, but I finally made it a few months later. While on the island, a couple of days before visiting the Asklepieion, I was beset by a sudden, serious and unexpected medical condition. So determined was I to get to the Asklepieion that I did not call on my travel medical insurance and decided to "tough it out", but by the time I reached the temple I was having great difficulty in walking because my ability to balance was profoundly impaired, thus hampering my getting around the large precinct, especially the steep steps between the three tiers. As I struggled and staggered on, I couldn't help but smile ruefully at the

irony of it all. But, happily, the debilitating and scary symptoms steadily eased and disappeared over the following week or two. Maybe there had been a doctor in the house after all – maybe the Asklepieion really was a place of healing. **FT**

NOTES

1 There are a number of variations on the anglicised spelling of "Asklepieion" (plural Asklepieia) and, indeed, the name of the god, "Asklepios". The usual variation is "Aesculapion" and "Aesculapius" respectively, though there are others. What is arguably the most common current form is as used here in this article.

2 This year, 2012, is Lawrence Durrell's centenary year, and several events are planned – see <http://bit.ly/KyeEp6> (durrell2012.com).

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Visions of Heaven and Hell are unusual, but far from unknown. They can be associated with near-death experiences, induced by drugs or triggered by advanced mind-altering techniques.

Often the paradise-tourists come back with remarkably similar descriptions of the world beyond death. They talk of a land of heightened colours and beautiful gardens. They see dead relatives, heavenly gates, angels and even Jesus.

Yet, say the sceptics, as convincing as such sights might seem to those who experience them, they are no more than delusions. The images described are drawn from art, religion and culture and are not in any way a true foretaste of an afterlife. As Professor Stephen Hawking has said, heaven is "a fairy tale for people afraid of the dark".

However, this standard, rational explanation is challenged by several recent cases of children giving detailed descriptions of Heaven at an age when, it is argued, they would have been too young to have the adult's cultural repertoire on which to draw. In some instances, children have provided information of which they could have had no prior knowledge or have relayed information of a significance they would not have understood.

THE BOYS WHO WENT TO HEAVEN

Colton Burpo, from Nebraska, astonished his parents with his account of a vision of Heaven. The pastor's son was almost four years old and seriously ill with a ruptured appendix when, in 2003, he had his 'spiritual' adventure. Four months later, after he had recovered, the story of his heavenly visit came out bit by bit. To begin with, his father Todd recalls, Colton started coming out with "quirky things".

"Jesus told me to be nice," he said one day, and then described meeting John the Baptist, seeing angels and sitting on Jesus's lap. That the small son of a church pastor with a child's imagination could come up with such obviously Christian-based stories did not surprise his parents. They were, however, taken aback by their son's accurate descriptions of them at the time he was ill. He described travelling out of his body and seeing events in the hospital. "You were in a little room by yourself praying," he said to his father, "and Mommy was in a different room talking on the phone."

The bombshell revelation came in a conversation between Colton and his mother, Sonja. "I have two sisters," he announced. "You had a baby die in your tummy, didn't you?"

While Colton's sister knew of the baby their parents had lost, Colton was considered too young to be told. Seeing his mother's shock at what he had said, Colton added,

"She's okay. God adopted her."

He described how in Heaven his sister had run up to him and started hugging him. "What was her name?" his mother asked.

"She doesn't have a name. You guys didn't name her."

In addition to meeting his sister, Colton also told his father of his meeting with the great grandfather, 'Pop', he never knew. "He's really nice," Colton said, "and he's got wings."

Over months and years, Colton's recollections were noted by his father who, with author Lynn Vincent, wrote up the family story for a book called *Heaven is for Real*. Like Lynn's other notable publication, which she co-wrote with Sarah Palin, it became a bestseller and was especially popular with the American conservative Christian constituency.

Colton's recollections began with a remark that he had seen angels in the hospital. "Details came out in bits and pieces over dinner, running errands or during the general flow of life. He saw the gates of Heaven, he said: 'They were made of gold and there were pearls on them.' The heavenly city itself was made of something shiny, 'like gold or silver'. The flowers and trees in Heaven were 'beautiful', and there were animals of every kind."

Another boy from a similar American background is Alex Malarkey. He too has a story of going to Heaven, which his father, Kevin, has also turned into a book – *The Boy Who Came Back From Heaven*.

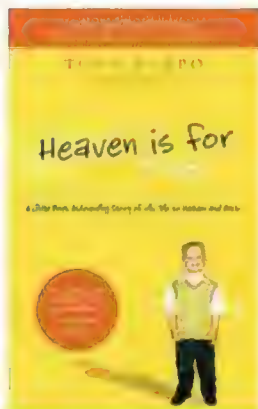
In 2004, father and son were involved in a car crash which left Alex, then six years old, in a coma. When he eventually regained consciousness, he was apparently able to describe events that had happened when he was unconscious. He also talked of angels taking him through the gates of Heaven and of meeting and talking to Jesus.

The heavenly skyline is awesome, Alex reported, making New York seem small. It is a physical place, where he could walk, but he was so much in awe of what he saw that he paid little attention to what his heavenly body was like.

Asked what worship was like in Heaven, he said it was always happening. "The angels have sessions of praising God. They go to His throne at certain times. I have seen the elders bowing down and saying 'holy, holy, holy'. But the most awesome part is the angels behind the elders. There are more than you can count."

In 2010, three year-old Paul Eicke from Lychen in Germany was revived after falling into a pond at his grandparents' home (see FT267:26). Later, he described seeing his great grandmother Emmi, who turned him back from a gate and urged him to go back to his parents.

"There was a lot of light and I was floating," Paul said. "I saw Grandma Emmi who said to me, 'What are you doing here Paul?"



KNOCKIN' ON HEAVEN'S DOOR, PART TWO: **TOURISTS IN PARADISE**

TED HARRISON recounts the story of Colton Burpo, the boy who went to heaven, and examines some other accounts, both old and new, of visits to the afterlife.



You must go back to Mummy and Daddy. I will wait for you here. I knew I was in Heaven. But grandma said I had to come home. She said that I should go back very quickly. Heaven looked nice. But I am glad I am back with Mummy and Daddy now.”¹

CELESTIAL WELCOME COMMITTEE

Presumably unknown to Colton, Alex or Paul is the fact that meeting deceased relatives is a commonly reported feature of adult visions of heaven.

Take the case of Don Piper. One moment, back in January 1989, he was driving along a Texan highway when a skidding truck veered across the central reservation towards him; the next instant, he found himself in front of a brilliant, ornate gate being welcomed by a large crowd of people.

Everyone was smiling, shouting and praising God, he later recalled. “Intuitively, I knew they were my celestial welcoming committee. It was as if they had all gathered just outside Heaven’s gate, waiting for me.

“The first person I recognised was Joe Kulbeth, my grandfather. He looked exactly as I remembered him, with his shock of white hair and what I called a big banana nose. He stopped momentarily and stood in front of me. A grin covered his face.

“I have no idea why my grandfather was the first person I saw.

“My great-grandmother, Hattie Mann, was Native American... She had false teeth, which she didn’t wear often. Yet when she smiled at me in Heaven, her teeth sparkled. I knew they were her own, and when she smiled, it was the most beautiful smile I had ever seen.”

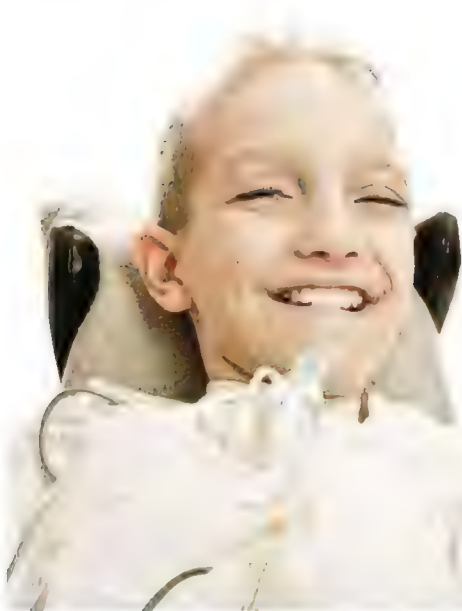
Back in Texas, Don Piper’s dead body was covered in a tarpaulin waiting to be taken to the morgue. A church pastor asked a police officer for permission to pray over his corpse. Ninety minutes after the accident,



TO EVERYONE’S ASTONISHMENT, THE CORPSE BEGAN TO SING A HYMN

to the astonishment of everyone at the scene, the corpse began to sing a hymn. Don was rushed to hospital where, after extensive surgery spread over 13 months, he recovered to tell his story of what happened and wrote a book called *90 minutes in Heaven*.

Former boxer, now Bishop, ‘Earthquake’



Kelley has been both to Heaven and Hell. Hell was his destination after a drug overdose; Heaven, the time he suffered a brain aneurysm. In Heaven, he met his son Scott. “‘This place is much more beautiful than you or Mom ever told me,’ he said. I said, ‘Scott, can I get on the other side, with you?’ He said, ‘No Dad, you can’t right now, you got to go back.’”

Visions of Heaven and Hell are not exclusively associated with near-death experiences. At other times, they occur during altered states of consciousness.

Probably the most famous description of Heaven is to be found in the Bible’s final book, the Revelation of St John the Divine:

“I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in Heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in Heaven, and one sat on the throne.”²

Other biblical descriptions of Heaven include that of St Paul, who wrote of a vision in which “he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words”.³

Paul’s description of what he saw is brief and mysterious. He was, it seems, warned not to say too much. Some later writers, however, have given much fuller accounts. The 18th-century mystic, scientist and philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg (see FT220:40–45) wrote thousands of words on the subject.

His book *Heaven and Hell*, written anonymously in Latin at first, gives a detailed description of what to expect in Heaven; it’s almost a guidebook to the next world. He too mentions how friends and family form a ‘meet and greet’ party to introduce the new soul to this strange new plane of existence.

“We are all recognised by our friends and relatives and by people we have known in one way or another. Further, we talk with each other and continue to see each other in keeping with our friendship in the world. I have heard many people who had just come from the world overjoyed to see their friends again, and their friends overjoyed that they had arrived.”

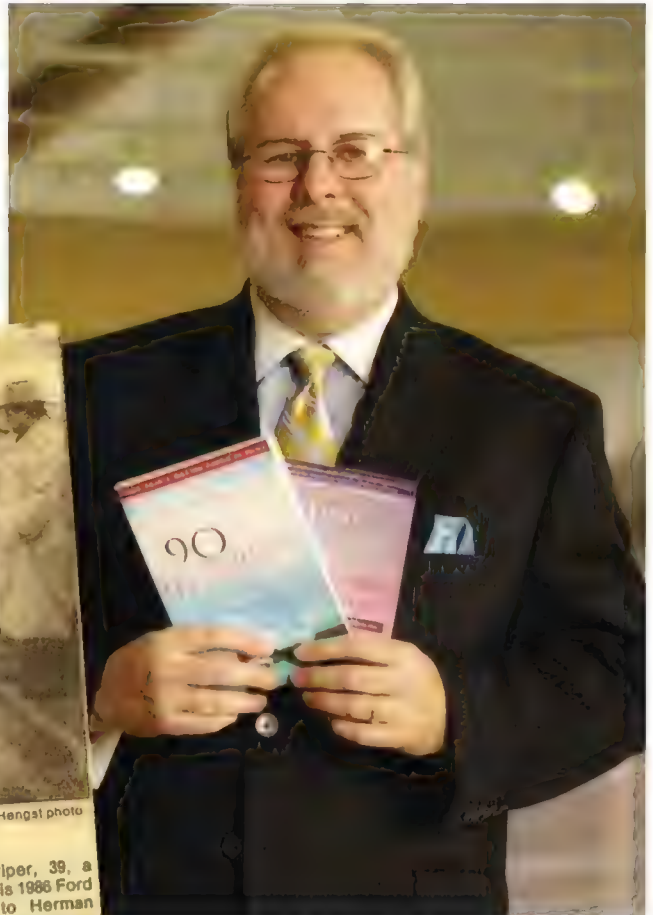
“When you die, you are greeted by loved ones so that you may understand what has happened,” wrote psychic Betty Bethards of her near-death experience. “There is a big celebration, like a birthday party... to celebrate your arrival.” Betty was the author of *Sex and Psychic Energy*, the book Elvis Presley was reputedly reading when he died. “The first few days of cross-over you are allowed to be with your teachers, and those who have loved you in the past. You are able to see those you left behind and to hear their thoughts and words.”⁴

HELLISHLY FAMILIAR

Many people who have a vision of the afterlife and return to tell the tale find the experience so real and convincing that they lose any fear of dying. Howard Storm’s experience was completely

TOP: Colton Burpo described meeting John the Baptist, seeing angels and sitting on Jesus’s lap.

ABOVE: Alex Malarkey visited a ‘Celestial City’ whose skyline made New York pale in comparison.



Wreck on bridge

Huntsville, Walker County: Trinity Peninsula and Texas Department of Corrections personnel responded to a five-vehicle wreck that occurred Wednesday afternoon on Highway 19 at the Trinity River bridge. The Jaws of Life were

used to remove Larry Donald Piper, 39, a minister from Friendswood, from his 1986 Ford Escort. Piper was transported to Herman Hospital in Houston and listed in guarded condition.

Stephen Hengst photo

life-transforming. He went from being a militant, Dawkins-style atheist to enrolling at a theological seminary to train to become a minister. When, in 1985, at the age of 38, and suffering from a perforated stomach, Storm felt himself slipping away, he assumed it would be into oblivion. Instead, he had a glimpse of Hell and torment. He described vividly the entities he encountered. "These creatures were once humans. The best way I can describe them is to think of the worst imaginable person stripped of every impulse of compassion. Countless people laughed, yelled and jeered. In the middle of this bedlam, I was the object of their desire. My torment was their excitement. The more I fought the greater their thrill."⁵

There is a familiar hellish ring to Howard Storm's account, but this doesn't necessarily add to its veracity. His nightmare world is the one familiar to many down the ages who have looked at wall paintings depicting the Last Judgement, or, in more recent times, watched horror movies. To what extent had his imagination and dream world been influenced by imagery of this kind? If it had been, he would hardly have been the first to have his vision of the afterlife shaped by what he had seen, heard and read in this one. For example, it can certainly be argued from the biblical texts that St John's vision of Heaven is very much influenced by that of Daniel, which he would have known from the Hebrew scriptures.

Unless, of course, the parallels can be explained in another way: that those who die go to the same place and through the same experience – and, therefore, should they return, inevitably come back with similar stories.

Todd Burpo noted that his son Colton's description of Heaven had one consistent theme. "He talked constantly about how much Jesus loves the children." The privileged place of children in Heaven was a theme noted by Swedenborg. Children, he wrote, make up a third of Heaven's



ABOVE: Don Piper was given up for dead after a seemingly fatal car crash. Ninety minutes later, the 'corpse' started singing a hymn – Don had returned from a trip to Heaven to spend 13 months in hospital.

BELOW: Howard Storm, the atheist art professor who, after a brief visit to Hell, retrained as a minister. One of Howard's paintings graces our opening spread.

population and it is where they mature "and by means of insights are brought into full angelic intelligence and wisdom".

'Earthquake' Kelley also described the children in Heaven. "There were children running. They were playing and having a good time. I wanted to go join them and play with them, they were having such a good time. There were three different groups of children playing and God told me that one group was children who died from wars, accidents, cancer. There was another group running and playing, and He said, 'That group over there were children that were aborted, and they were sent back to me.' And I could hear Him starting to cry, my God, I could hear His voice start to change like He was in so much pain. But there was another group playing. He said that this is a group of children that He sent to so-called 'church people' who listen to the ways of the world, and they secretly went and had an abortion, and they sent them back."⁶

CHILD VISIONARIES

It is not difficult to surmise how Colton Burpo could have known about the pre-natal death of his sister. His parents might not have told him, but his big sister could well



ABOVE: Todd Burpo, Sonja Burpo and Colton Burpo being interviewed by Savannah Guthrie about Colton's heavenly journey on NBC News's *Today* show.

have done so and the information been absorbed by the three-year-old. The more difficult question arises when considering how Colton could have known about the child-orientated nature of heavenly visions.

One suggestion that has been offered by sceptics is that he unwittingly used techniques similar to those employed by a medium looking for responses to suggestions during a cold reading.

Colton came out with a whole range of stories, some of which his parents immediately reacted to, others of which they let pass. To keep his parents' attention, as any child would, Colton repeated and elaborated on those stories he sensed his parents preferred: 'children in Heaven' was certainly a theme that won their approval.

Much of the religious imagery in Colton's stories can perhaps be attributed to his background. His father being a pastor and the family steeped in Christian practice, Colton would have heard his father preach and have been told children's stories by the same man. No wonder he reported that, in Heaven, Jesus had a rainbow-coloured horse as a pet.

Similarly, Kevin Malarkey's six-year-old son Alex's vision of Heaven has elements in its imagery that could be explained through family environment. Both he and Colton would have heard a conservative protestant theology taught at their churches. Both boys included in their visions references to judgement and apocalypse. Kevin Malarkey, who is a Christian therapist by profession with a counselling practice in Columbus, Ohio, laid great emphasis on the apocalyptic message in his book about his son's

experience.

The 'I've been to Heaven' genre of books has become popular reading in certain church circles. They are written as evidence-based counters to the new militant atheism, and they have a particular potency when written by or about child visionaries. Yet they are undermined by their own theology. As one critic puts it, Colton goes to Heaven a Methodist and comes back a heretic. For his description of the orthodox Trinitarian God reverts to the old view promoted by Arius in the fourth century and quashed by the Council of Nicæa. In Colton's heaven, God is the boss and his son settles for the number two spot.

As the critic and blogger James Morrow, aka The Passionate Rationalist, notes, "When Colton's mother asks him whether his miscarried sister was adopted by Jesus, he replies, 'No, Mommy. His Dad did.' Recalling the holy throne room, Colton remarks, 'Jesus's chair is right next to his Dad's!' Articulating the essence of his chat with the Nazarene, Colton explains, 'Well, Jesus told me he died on the cross so we could go see his Dad.'"

Morrow dismisses Colton's Heaven as "a kind of ongoing Sunday School pageant, complete with winged grandparents and haloed angels. What makes Colton's journey so implausible is not the parochialism of it all, but the contrived incredulity with which Dad greets each new revelation from his son. Every time our 60lb [27kg] prophet wafts out yet another theological insight or scriptural paraphrase, Burpo maddeningly insists that the gem in question couldn't possibly trace to Colton's upbringing, but

only to a close encounter of the infinite kind."⁷

Nevertheless Colton is being used as a standard-bearer for American evangelical faith. In an ABC News⁸ confrontation, in which the two protagonists only actually 'met' on screen, Colton was put head to head with Stephen Hawking.

"I regard the brain as a computer," ABC quotes from Hawking's *Guardian* interview of May 2011, "which will stop working when its components fail. There is no Heaven or afterlife for broken down computers."

"That's OK by me," says Colton, "but I've been there". **FT**

NOTES

- 1 *D.Mail*, 19 April 2010.
- 2 Revelation ch 4 vv 1-2.
- 3 2 Corinthians ch 12 v 4.
- 4 www.near-death.com.
- 5 Howard Storm: *My Descent into Death: A Second Chance At Life*, Harmony, 2005, p17.
- 6 spiritlessons.com.
- 7 james-morrow.livejournal.com.
- 8 18 May 2011.

Author Biography



TED HARRISON is a writer, artist, broadcaster and former BBC Religious Affairs Correspondent. His work in modern stigmata earned him a PhD in theology. He has researched the Elvis Presley and Princess Diana cults, and his latest book *Apocalypse When?* is now available from Darton, Longman and Todd.

A NEW WAY TO EMBRACE THE UFO PHENOMENON

LIGHTQUEST

YOUR GUIDE TO SEEING AND INTERACTING WITH
UFOs, MYSTERY LIGHTS AND PLASMA INTELLIGENCES



ANDREW COLLINS

INTRODUCTION BY GREGORY L. LITTLE

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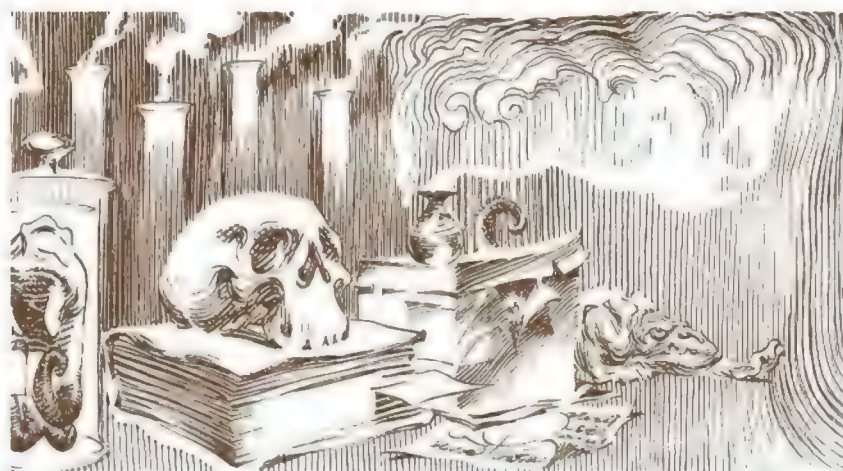
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The Fortean Times

Random Dictionary of the Damned

compiled by the Hierophant's Apprentice



No 46: **SPIRIT PHOTOS**

The story of spirit photography borders on the tragic, in the sense that its most notable practitioners have tended to rise to fame and (not least) fortune, then be found out as frauds, find themselves in court, and die in penury. Which is no more than they deserve for exploiting the bereaved. Spirit photography has had its defenders despite the exposure of these grotesque charlatans, but there are problems with the case they make, as we'll see. We'll look too at a modern case that's also problematic in that if trickery was involved, it was certainly cleverly done.

The first photograph of the kind was taken by a Mr W Campbell of Jersey City, New Jersey. In 1860, he took a test photograph of an empty chair in his studio, which (apart from him) was also empty. Curiously, when developed, the image included a small boy. Campbell was unable to achieve the same effect again. Spiritualists and the like-minded may believe that this was a 'spontaneous' case, and consider Campbell psychically insufficiently sensitive to have picked up other æthereal presences and translated them to film. Perhaps more likely is that he did not realise how the small boy had appeared as an 'extra' (as these 'spirit' images are called) in his picture. Campbell was presumably using a 'wet plate' process (introduced into the US in 1854), in which light-sensitive chemicals were spread on a glass plate, which was then inserted into a camera and exposed. Once positive prints had been made, the plates could be washed clean and re-used. If the cleaning was less

than thorough, a faint image of the previous subject would remain on the plate and appear as part of a new image when the plate, freshly coated with chemicals, was recycled. It's noticeable that the ferrotype or tintype system – patented in 1856 – which uses a coated *iron* plate to create a permanent, one-off image, produced no 'spirit' photographs.¹

BALM TO THE ACHING BREAST

The first to produce spirit pictures regularly was William H Mumler, an engraver for a top-drawer Boston jeweller and keen amateur photographer. The story goes that in 1861, aged 29, he discovered the image of a female cousin, dead a dozen years, on one of a series of self-portraits he had taken. Whether anyone else verified his claim or recognised the cousin isn't clear, but it was smart of Mumler to place her demise well before the arrival of glass-plate photography. Either Mumler worked out how to achieve the effect or, once the picture was developed, realised what had happened – he had re-used an incompletely cleaned plate and in effect created a double exposure. He was later to say that he "had experienced a strange trembling sensation in his right arm that left him feeling exhausted" when posing for this particular picture.²



THE PRESIDENT'S SPIRIT: William H Mumler's famous photograph of Mrs Mary Todd Lincoln, with her dead husband standing behind her.

Naturally, spiritualists – their movement, centred on Boston, was but a dozen years old – were much impressed, and

as Mumler's reputation spread he announced himself as a "medium for taking spirit photographs" and took off two days a week from his engraving job to handle the flow of clients. Unfortunately, some of the 'spirits' in Mumler's portraits were recognised as living people, and reported as such in the correspondence columns of Boston newspapers. It was even suggested he had broken into clients' houses to purloin pictures of their relatives. Business began to slip.

So, in 1868, he moved to New York City, charging up to \$10 for a dozen (some sources say three) of his portraits – five times the going rate – whether or not spirits appeared in them. Many of his clients were still grieving for relatives lost in the Civil War. "What joy to the troubled heart! What balm to the aching breast!... To know that our friends who have passed away can return and give us unmistakable evidence of a life hereafter," he trilled in a flyer. Professional photographers were outraged, and persuaded New York's mayor to investigate. A city marshal arrested Mumler for fraud in March 1869; his hearing opened a month later. A troop of Mumler's clients went through the court to testify to their belief in the genuineness of their photographs. The prosecution produced an array of photographic experts who described the techniques Mumler could have used. A surprise witness was Phineas T ("There's a sucker born every minute") Barnum, who had bought some of Mumler's photographs for his museum and had, he said, received letters from Mumler implying they were faked. But the letters had gone up in smoke when the museum burned down. When his own displays of hokum were brought up, Barnum snapped back that at least he always gave good value for money. In his decision, the judge announced he was morally convinced that Mumler was a fraud, but the prosecution had not *proven* that. So Mumler walked free, albeit groaning under a legal bill of \$3,000.

He returned to Boston, setting up another studio in his mother-in-law's house. It was here in 1871 that Mrs Tydall, heavily veiled and dressed all in black, called unannounced and asked to be photographed. Mumler wrote in his autobiography: "[Her] crêpe veil was so thick that it was impossible to distinguish a single feature of her face. I asked if she intended having her picture taken with her veil. She replied, 'When you are ready, I will remove it.' I said I was ready, upon which she removed the veil and the picture was taken." Mumler claimed that only on seeing the print did he realise 'Mrs Tydall' was Mrs Mary Todd Lincoln: for the image of her late husband Abraham Lincoln had appeared behind her, his hands resting on her shoulders.

After some encouragement from Mrs Mumler, Mrs Lincoln was inclined to agree the figure was of her husband, although it must be pointed out Mrs Mumler was herself an ardent spiritualist. It must also be pointed out that high-quality versions of this picture appear to show a *second* 'spirit', to Lincoln's left. Some kind of double exposure seems to have been used, but sceptics have yet to turn up the original (supposing any have looked for it), although given Mary Lincoln's initial doubts, the original may not be of Lincoln himself. This became Mumler's most famous photograph, but it didn't salvage his business. He died in poverty in 1884, having first destroyed all his negatives.

HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

Almost contemporary with Mumler was Frederick Hudson, England's first spirit photographer, who began operating early in 1872, introduced to spiritualist circles by the notorious medium Mrs Agnes Guppy.³ Hudson often used his daughter as the medium through whom the spirits were contacted and, somehow, impressed their images on his photographic plates. A mere glance at one of these (below) is enough to induce guffaws: here we allegedly see Lady Helena Newenham and her 'spirit' daughter. Who was not to be recognised by her face, obviously. And who would have guessed people dressed so badly and grew so *large* in the afterlife? The will to believe is no better illustrated than by naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, co-formulator of the theory of evolution by natural selection. Clearly no fool, Wallace was nonetheless convinced by séance-room phenomena and of Hudson's ability (so much for the incompatibility of science and religion). Wallace wrote:

"On March 14th, 1874, I went to Hudson's, by appointment, for the first and only time... Before going to Hudson's I sat with Mrs Guppy], and had a communication by raps with the effect that my mother would appear on the plate if she could. I sat three times, always choosing my own position. Each time a second figure appeared in the negative with me... I recognised none of these figures in the negatives; but the moment I got the proofs, the first glance showed me that the third plate contained an unmistakable portrait of my mother – like her both in features and in expression; *not such a likeness as a portrait taken during life*, but a somewhat pensive, idealized likeness – *yet still, to me, an unmistakable likeness.*"

Hudson apparently used a customised camera, made by Howell's, suppliers to the conjuring trade, that flipped a pre-prepared wax-paper positive of the 'extra' in front of the glass plate immediately before the shot was taken. Both images thus appeared on the negative plate; and thus too (as on one occasion at least) Hudson could allow others to operate the camera while remaining confident it would produce 'spirit' pictures. Hudson was also known to dress up sometimes in spooky garb

and quietly flit into frame long enough to register an image on the plate while the lengthy exposure took place – during which time the sitter, of course, had to keep very still.

In about 1905, carpenter William Hope (1863–1933) produced his first apparent spirit photograph, and soon founded the 'Crewe circle' of psychic photographers. Interestingly, they destroyed all their negatives – ostensibly because they feared accusations of witchcraft. Then they were 'adopted' by the Rev. Thomas Colley, who fully endorsed their work despite Hope, in one print, representing someone else's grandmother as Colley's own mother (Colley nonetheless insisted the image was genuine: see FT254:57–58). One of Hope's favourite tricks was to use a suitably garbed assistant to appear long enough in the frame to register on the film, but not long enough to be noticed by the sitters.

Another ruse – probably used in the images following, as the 'extras' appear in *front* of the sitters – was the straightforward double exposure of a prepared plate. This perhaps explains the disproportionately over- or under-sized images of 'spirits' that



BAGGY MONSTER: Lady Helena Newenham and her 'spirit' daughter.



POKING HER NOSE IN: Two of William Hope's 'spirit photos', showing (left) the sister of a man prominent in the Spiritualist Church appearing with a couple and (right) a woman's face in a transparent cloak showing up with a grouping of a woman and two male figures.

appear in so many of Hope's pictures. Some sleight-of-hand was also occasionally called for, which is how Hope was caught out by Society for Psychical Research (SPR) investigator Harry Price in 1922. As Troy Taylor tells the story:

"During the sitting, which was organized with hymn singing and prayers like a standard séance, Hope and Price went into the adjoining dark room. Price examined the photographic slide that Hope planned to use and he secretly impressed 12 small punctures into it with a needle. He then was asked to open a packet of plates that he had brought with them. These plates had come from the Imperial Dry Plate Co. and had been imprinted (at Price's suggestion) with their trademark in the corner. The trademark would then appear on the negative of whatever picture was developed. Price loaded two plates into the slide and then Hope asked for the slide.

"As he took it from Price's hand, Harry watched his movements very carefully, which was hard to do [in] the dull, red darkness of the room. Very quickly, in one smooth movement, Hope placed the dark slide into the left breast pocket of his coat and then, apparently, pulled it back out again. Price knew that the slide had been changed but sat down for the photograph to be taken anyway. When it was over, he refused to sign the plates, as Hope wanted him to, and as he examined the slide, he discovered that his 12 needle marks had 'mysteriously' vanished. It was clearly not the same slide that he had given to Hope to use! He did not accuse Hope of a swindle on the spot, fearing that his evidence of deception would be destroyed, but took away two photographs that had been taken of Price, one of which contained a beautiful female 'extra' – but on neither plate was the Imperial Dry Plate trademark! Hope had managed to switch the plates as well. [Price] was able to show that they were not the same type of plates that he had given to Hope to use, as they were a different thickness, weight and color and were 'fast' plates, while the ones that Hope gave back to him were 'slow' ones."

When Price published his findings in the *Journal* of the SPR, spiritualists were outraged. That doyen of steely logic, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, accused Price of switching the plates himself, and insisted to the end of his days that Hope's work was genuine. Thus fortified, Hope continued to profit from stiff fees and the relatives of those lost in World War I.⁴

A POLAROID OF PUZZLES

In the spring of 2000, Mrs Margaret Wehling invited SPR investigators to witness elaborate physical phenomena apparently being produced by spirits via a medium, a middle-aged Asian man identified as 'D', of whom little else is known beyond his being involved in domestic electrical and electronic repair work. Three séances were held at Mrs Wehling's home in Ealing.⁵ The phenomena were for the most part classic séance-room stuff: table-tilting, fork-bending, coin apports, materialising a spirit owl (heard but not seen) and snake (stroked but not seen), floating lights and trumpet, pens writing untouched by human hand, and so on. The most intriguing effect came from a Polaroid Joycam camera. This model is manually, not electrically operated, so that the spirits would have to use their own efforts to eject an exposed frame. The cassettes were secretly marked and the serial number of the first (unexposed) frame taken to detect any substitutions. The loaded camera, its lens taped over, was put "several feet" from the medium and, on one occasion, was protected from interference by netting; bells would chime if this was disturbed.

At one sitting, the spirits declined to produce an image of Sir Oliver Lodge (a founding member of the SPR) but agreed to 'photograph' Mrs Wehling. The result, wrote Montague Keen, "was clearly much more detailed than just an arbitrary splash of colour, and seemed to me to bear some resemblance to an Aubrey Beardsley-like floating image of an elegant, slim and gaudily attired woman with an extravagant fan or flourish... However, it did not resemble [Margaret Wehling]." The frame bore the correct identification number. At another sitting,

"There was one unusual feature of the control film... which was not apparent on the succeeding occasion: it began to develop an image, watched by most of those present. The image appeared first to be an impression of grained wood, but was gradually seen to be cathedral-like. I... was told that some human image had begun to emerge also. Then it began to fade, and was soon reduced to a black film, although retaining some iridescence. To double-check the correct sequence, and discover whether this effect might be repeated, I pulled out a second control film. This remained completely black."

Prof. Richard Wiseman and Dr Emma Greening examined the Ealing prints and noticed that there were "grey or beige areas"

where the developing gel (released when the print is extracted from the camera) hadn't been distributed evenly across the image. "We jammed a flat, thin piece of metal between the roller and photo as we pulled the photo out of the camera, which replicated the original images by interfering with the spreading of the [gel] on the film." This doesn't explain how the medium (or a collaborator) was able to reach the camera undetected, but it does suggest that Montague Keen may have been the victim of Eye of the Beholder Syndrome (a.k.a. wishful thinking) in discerning an "elegant, slim and gaudily attired woman" in the image he describes above.



CIRCLE GAME: Dave Chorley, BBC TV 1991, and as a spectre in 2012. Note the new hairdo, and the blob on the right, which moved along with the 'spirit' face.

THE GLASS CIRCLE GAME

On 15 April 2012 a video appeared on the website of Robbert van den Broeke, a Dutch psychic who claims to have had various strange experiences involving crop circles. Nancy Talbott, a long-time associate of the psychic, broke the news to an astonished anglophone world that Van den Broeke had achieved "the manifestation of clear images on video and digital cameras" of the late crop-circle researcher Pat Delgado and the late circle-maker Dave Chorley: "Images of these two men first appeared in the early morning hours of April 14, 2012, when Robbert v/d Broeke 'felt' their presences and had contact with each telepathically... Robbert sat down and closed his eyes to focus his attention on their 'energetic presence' as his friend Stan set up the video camera and turned it on, in case someone or something should appear."⁶

What appeared was, ere long, thoroughly deconstructed by former Goldsmiths College music lecturer Roger Wibberley, who posted a video on YouTube⁷ that demonstrated that Van den Broeke had lifted stills of both men from a 1991 BBC-tv news item on Doug and Dave's 'coming out' as crop-circle makers.

How was the trick done? Wibberley doesn't say, but long-time professional photographer Rob Irving comments that the way Delgado's and Chorley's images appear is "what you'd expect" from a 'Pepper's Ghost'.⁸ The technique was long used in

theatres to produce realistic spooks on stage, and in 2006 was deployed at the Grammy Awards to create a 'live' performance of Madonna with the Gorillaz.⁹ In Van den Broeke's case, a sheet of glass would have been placed at an angle between him and a video screen or printed screen grab showing the 'ghostly' image. The image is reflected off the glass, and so appears translucent as well as, in this instance, distorted.

Van den Broeke's first video more or less gives the game away – unless they have quirky hairdressers in heaven – for in it Dave Chorley's hair is parted on the right; in the BBC clip, as in life, he parts his hair on the left. As his image wavers across the screen (effected simply by twisting the video screen about), too, a tiny dot of light to his left keeps pace with his 'spirit' face. The Dutch psychic or his friend Stan seem to have spotted the bad hair, for their second video (as used by Wibberley) has Chorley's parting restored to its rightful – leftful? – place.

Of course it doesn't follow from debunking a few frauds that all spirit photographs are faked. That follows from the inability of anyone to explain how a genuine spirit photo might be 'taken' in the first place. A 'spirit' photograph is distinguished from one of a ghost in that people do see ghosts – so it can be assumed, for the sake of the argument, that ghosts reflect light, and light is what is registered on a photographic negative. While not all the 'ghosts' in ghost photos were seen when their pictures were taken, no one has ever reported a thing, never mind anything anomalous, being seen during the taking of a spirit photograph. It might be argued that a medium (often present on such occasions) picks up the image either by telepathy or directly from the 'other side', and impresses it on the negative by psychokinesis, but no one can explain how all that is supposed to work either. Lacking any coherent theoretical support, the claimed phenomenon is shaved away with a stroke of Occam's razor. There are no real spirit photographs. There is, on the other hand, no shortage of predatory and unscrupulous people, nor of gullible ones for them to exploit. The only interesting question left is how the frauds create their effects. **FT**

NOTES

1 Joe Nickell: "Photo-ghosts: Images of the Spirit Realm?", *Skeptical Inquirer* Vol.32, No.4, July/Aug 2008, <http://bit.ly/Mt7Bim> (csicop.org).

2 Sources for this section on William Mumler include: Troy Taylor: "Spirit Photography", <http://bit.ly/bScWvQ> (prairieghosts.com); Massimo Polidoro: "Photos of Ghosts: The Burden of Believing the Unbelievable", *Skeptical Inquirer* Vol.35 No.4, July/Aug 2011, <http://bit.ly/uB6TM7> (csicop.org); American Museum of Photography: "The Mumler Mystery", <http://bit.ly/Mwq9n> (photographymuseum.com); "William H. Mumler", <http://bit.ly/NjYAb> (psychictruth.info); College of Psychic Studies: "William Stainton Moses Collection" (where Mary Todd Lincoln is first identified as 'Mrs Lindall'), <http://bit.ly/L3Z6rl>

(collegeofpsychicstudies.co.uk); Anon: "The ghost and Mr Mumler", *American History Magazine* 8 Feb 2008, <http://bit.ly/M3F2ZO> (historynet.com).

The definitive work on Mumler is Louis Kaplan: *The Strange Case of William Mumler, Spirit Photographer*, University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

3 Sources for the account of Frederick Hudson include J Gordon Melton: *Encyclopedia of Occultism & Parapsychology*, Gale 2001, pp750–1; Alfred Russel Wallace: *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, George Redway 1896 [rev. ed.], footnote pp196–7; American Museum of Photography <http://bit.ly/8TMni> (photographymuseum.com), and related links.

4 Troy Taylor: "William Hope: Secrets of the Crewe Circle of Spirit Photographers" <http://bit.ly/KTcQXT> (prairieghosts.com). Further

information from Polidoro, *op. cit.*

5 Information on the Ealing séances and the means of faking 'spirit' photographs with the Polaroid Joycam is drawn from Montague Keen: "Physical Phenomena Observed in a Mediumistic London Circle", written Sept 2002 for the *Journal of the SPR* but unpublished; retrieved from <http://bit.ly/N8vkmS> (montaguekeen.com) (now defunct); M Keen: "The Ealing Sittings: Could They Have Been Faked?", 2003, <http://bit.ly/MtcfwC> (montaguekeen.com); Peter Flew: "Experiences at Ealing Sittings", *The Paranormal Review* No.28 (Oct 2003); and personal communications with Prof. Richard Wiseman and Dr Emma Greening, 18 June 2012.

6 Talbott's account, with stills from the video, is at: <http://bit.ly/PrreJD> (bltresearch.com) and the

Van der Broeke video itself at <http://bit.ly/NPc2YD> (robbertvandenbroeke.nl). Van der Broeke's account, as reported by Talbott, of the Chorley shade's current view of crop circles is grotesque: "Chorley's 'consciousness' then communicated his awareness (now that he is 'in the afterlife') of how important it is that people respect the loving force behind the crop circles. Chorley also expressed sincere regret that while he was on Earth he had gone to the media and said that crop circles were 'just a joke', and that he and Doug had said they made them all. He told Robbert that he knew there were many genuine crop circles – those that occur around Robbert and many in other countries around the world, and also some each year in England. Chorley then added that 'angels' and 'light beings' are now 'providing energy' to many of the man-made

circles (particularly those in the UK) because these circles have become spiritual meeting places. He emphasized that people should not be confused if they have mysterious experiences in man-made formations since many of these circles are now also being imbued with this 'positive spiritual energy'."

7 <http://bit.ly/LDKoxz> (YouTube) (not currently available).

8 Pers. comm., 3 June 2012. For Mr Irving's own experiments in spirit photography, see **FT131:28–31**.

9 David Johnson: "Peppaz Ghost", <http://bit.ly/MF3GRB> (livedesignonline.com). For more on the Pepper's Ghost technique, see the entry on John Pepper and Henry Dircks at <http://bit.ly/h6kG3W> (precinemahistory.net).

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The Zombie Apocalypse

JACK SARGEANT ponders the significance of the recent rash of cannibal attacks in the US and subsequent online talk of a 'zombie apocalypse'. Might this be just the start?



JACK SARGEANT writes mainly on crime and cinema. His *Naked Lens: Beat Cinema* was expanded and reissued in 2009. He is currently working on his PhD. See www.jacktext.net.

Few people who search for news reports of strange phenomena can have failed to see the story of the Miami "zombie attack" which occurred on 26 May this year (see FT290:27). The vicious assault saw a naked man devouring another man's face during a prolonged attack that lasted some 18 minutes.

The attacker, 31-year-old Rudy Eugene, was reportedly shot by police but continued eating the face of 65-year-old Ronald Poppo (accounts differ as to whether some 75 or 80 per cent of the man's face was destroyed) before finally being killed by a police officer. Some reports described Eugene as having flesh hanging from his teeth and growling at the cops as they tried to stop him.¹

Looking for an explanation, some reports suggested that drugs were involved, and initially there was much speculation that Eugene could have been taking 'bath salts', a colloquial term for Methylendioxypropylvalerone, a psychoactive stimulant that raises core temperature, increases heart rate and has been attributed with causing psychotic illusions while making the user comparatively impervious to a degree of pain. The drug has been compared to a combination of speed, cocaine and LSD.² Later tests, however, revealed only marijuana in Eugene's system.

It was not just the violent Miami case that had online communities talking about zombies, though, and readers quickly linked it to other unusual phenomena in Florida. The previous week had seen reports of students with a mysterious rash and a man banging his own head on a police car and spitting blood at the cops who were arresting him.³

Within days, other stories of spontaneous biting assaults and cannibalism were making headlines and buzzing across the Internet. No doubt many of these were common events; one per cent of emergency room admissions in the USA are for bites, with human-on-human bites, commonly caused during brawls, ranking third after those due to dogs and cats.⁴ Nevertheless, on Friday 1 June "zombie apocalypse" was the third most searched term online (or the second according to some sources) and the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) was prompted to issue a statement saying that it "does not know of a virus or condition that would reanimate the dead".⁵

The girlfriend of Rudy Eugene came forward with a different theory to that of drug psychosis. She suggested that her partner, who carried his Bible with him everywhere, was actually the subject of a Vodou curse, although neither evidence nor motive for such a curse has been forthcoming.⁶ Vodou is commonly linked to Haitian zombies, but these are very different to the post-George Romero flesh-eating ghouls of popular imagination (FT140:32–38; 164:46–48). However, what if somebody *believed* they were under a curse that would turn them into a zombie – but understood a zombie not as the traditional creature of Haitian Vodou but instead as the ferocious cannibal monster they'd seen in movies or on television? Under such a scenario, might the victim manifest a form of psychosis that involved mimicking his understanding of a zombie drawn not from any spiritual belief but from the vagaries of pop culture?

Psychologists have long recognised Jerusalem Syndrome, the phenomenon whereby tourists to Jerusalem manifest religious-based psychiatric disorders (see FT118:21). Identified in three forms, Type 3

Jerusalem Syndrome manifests when a "previously mentally balanced person becomes psychotic after arriving in Jerusalem. The psychosis is characterised by an intense religious character".⁷ But could obsessive beliefs in the Apocalypse (whether personal or collective) create an end-time psychosis beyond the confines of the Holy City? Could quasi-religious, or even wholly secular, notions of apocalyptic eschatology form the basis for temporary periods of psychosis that manifest when the sufferer believes in the imminence of the end of the world?

The relentless popularity of zombie films, books and television shows appears to indicate that the undead apocalypse is emerging as *the* great secular end-time myth. This apocalypse has been linked in popular culture to everything from new man-made diseases through to space rays, chemical pollution, nuclear fallout and emergent viruses; all are common anxieties that regularly feature in the news. Meanwhile, the word 'zombie' has increasingly been mobilised by journalists for a variety of disparate phenomena, from ants suffering from fungal parasites to the economy and housing market.

Simultaneously, the popularity of zombies as a locus of identification is increasing, with zombie walks (see FT258:6–7) now frequent phenomena in the contemporary urban landscape. The ready enthusiasm of participants in these festive parades of the undead suggests that people no longer necessarily seek identification with the human survivors of zombie narratives but rather identify with the shambling undead hordes.

Socio-cultural anxieties are increasingly manifested not in wanting to *survive* the apocalypse, but merely to participate in it – to be there at the end. The CDC's statement is indicative of the powerful hold that the zombie apocalypse has on the collective imagination; after all, they haven't had to issue statements on vampires or werewolves.

The great flagellant processions of previous centuries are a testament to cultural manifestations of apocalyptic delirium. So, is an extra-geographical manifestation of Jerusalem Syndrome possible, stimulated not by location but by a belief in the reality of portents of the end of the world; and, if so, will we be seeing more psychotic zombie phenomena? **FT**

NOTES

1 <http://ti.me/JSAtxn> (newsfeed.time.com).

2 <http://bit.ly/LaQlxc> (news.blogs.cnn.com).

3 <http://gaw.kr/JTcpuu> (gawker.com).

4 <http://bit.ly/LFPDMq> (health.yahoo.net).

5 <http://bit.ly/KuQeR5> (news.com.au).

6 <http://hrlid.us/KVurQz> (miamiherald.com).

7 <http://bit.ly/MyKPV2> (jerusalem-syn-drome.info).



Not quite the Gospel truth?

ANDREW SMITH investigates the sensational claims made for a leather-bound 'lost' Gospel of Barnabas – said to be so explosive that it will cause the collapse of Christianity.



ANDREW SMITH is editor of *The Gnostic: A Journal of Gnosticism, Western Esotericism and Spirituality* and author of *A Dictionary of Gnosticism; The Gnostics: History, Tradition, Scriptures, Influence and other books.*

From time to time, ancient writings emerge from their hiding places in desert, tomb, library and bog. Some, like the Gospel of Judas, are subjected to the full gamut of promotional campaigns so that the money invested in them can be recouped, others, like the Revelation of the Magi,¹ get picked up by major publishers but fail to make much of a splash outside of academia. Most manage to grab at least a few newspaper column inches, but need to be pumped up with journalistic exaggeration to satisfy tabloid requirements.

Such was the case when the *Daily Mail*'s website trumpeted: "A leather-bound religious text, thought to date from the fifth century but discovered only 12 years ago, will cause the collapse of Christianity worldwide, claims Iran."²

The article went on to pile on the hyperbole, utilising all the standard tropes of 'lost gospel' discovery. The book came to light during an anti-smuggling operation in Turkey. It contains a text that will reveal the real truth about Jesus. Even better, Iranian news site Basij Press is claiming that it will cause the collapse of Christianity and will prove that Islam is the final religion. The book itself was worth £14 million, but, somewhat counter-intuitively, "A photocopy of a single page from the handwritten ancient manuscript is thought to be worth £1.5million." (If the book has more than 10 pages, there's more money to be made from the photocopies than the original!) As the cherry on the cake, the Vatican had asked to view the book.

The text in question was said to be a version of the Gospel of Barnabas, in the Syriac language – the form of Aramaic used in Syria. The tome was likely to date to the fifth or sixth century. At first glance, this was a modest claim for an apocryphal gospel, since the hook for these articles is usually the claim that the new discovery goes all the way back to the time of Jesus. But this time the

supposed dating immediately drew my suspicions, as it conveniently preceded Muhammad's birth in 632 CE.

A Gospel of Barnabas is mentioned in two independent sixth- and seventh-century lists of apocryphal gospels, but doesn't survive. However, there is another Gospel of Barnabas which is well known in the Muslim world and has been known to Western scholars since the 17th century in Italian and Spanish versions.

It is an odd work indeed, as bizarre as some of the 20th-century apocryphal gospels such as the *Aquarian Gospel of Jesus Christ* or the *Gospel of the Essenes*. But the Gospel of Barnabas is distinctive in being a Muslim gospel. About the length of all four canonical gospels added together, it envisages Jesus as merely the forerunner of Muhammad, playing John the Baptist to the Prophet, to the extent that John is entirely absent. Among the more interesting aspects of the text are Jesus's denial of being the Messiah and the claim that

He wasn't crucified, the latter being standard Muslim doctrine, but given an ingenious twist.

Barnabas only pops up in the New Testament in the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of Paul, but he is one of the 12 disciples. Jesus tells the disciples explicitly that he is not the Messiah, but that the Messiah who will come is unmistakably Muhammad. This is certainly peculiar. Jesus is referred to several times in the Qur'an itself as Messiah, which term, as interpreted in Islam, is merely a title for Jesus and doesn't convey the divine status that it does in Christianity.

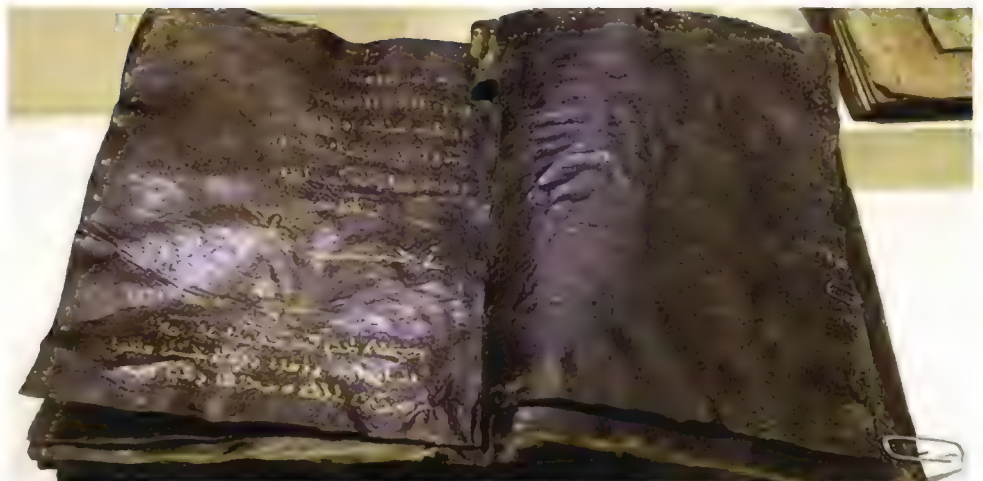
By far the most fascinating episode is the betrayal and crucifixion. In the Qur'an, Jesus was not killed by the Jews, but instead "one who was made to look like him" was crucified. This is reminiscent of some Gnostic traditions, such as that found in the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, in which a Simon (presumably Simon of Cyrene) is crucified instead of Jesus, who is able to laugh from on high at the ignorance of the archons who do this. It is possible that this Gnostic tradition somehow informed the version in the Qur'an, which has other episodes which resemble those of the apocryphal gospels.

But the Gospel of Barnabas goes one further. In chapter 215–216, the four archangels take Jesus out of a chamber via the window and up to the third heaven. Judas returns to the chamber

It envisages Jesus as the forerunner of Muhammad

OPPOSITE PAGE: Saint Barnabas.

BELOW: The leather codex claimed as a copy of the Gospel of Barnabas.



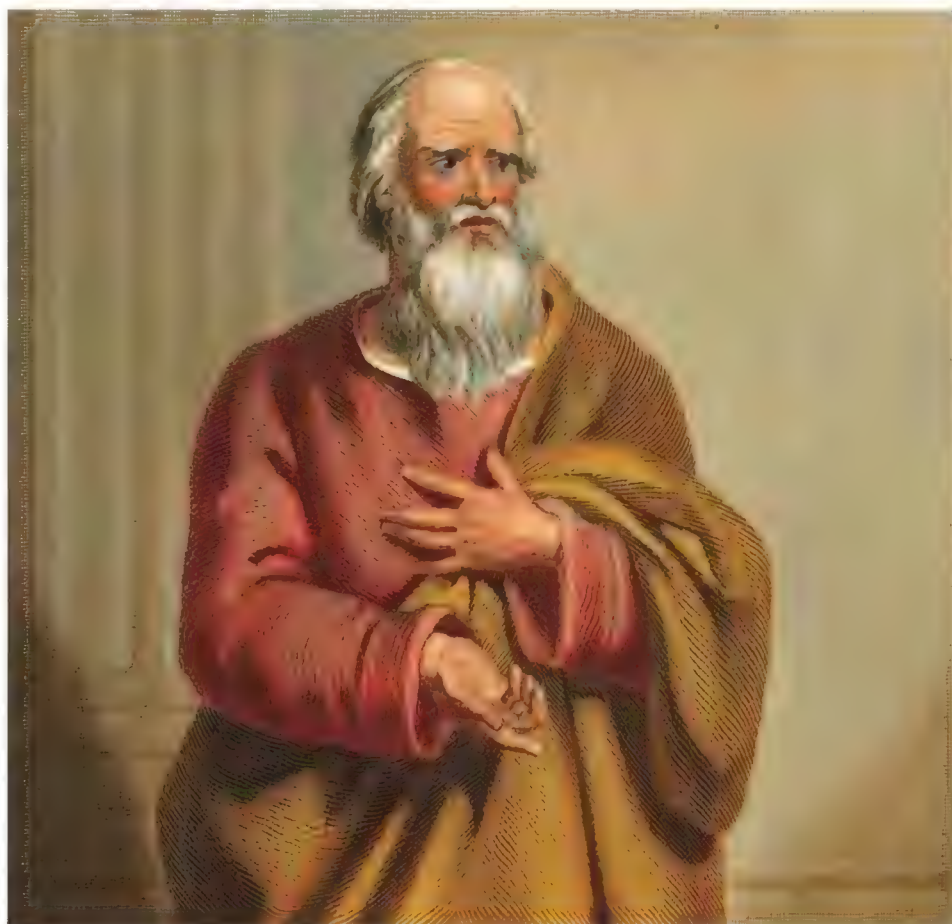
having betrayed Jesus, only to have his voice and form transformed into that of Jesus. Judas takes the place of Jesus throughout the rest of the story, protesting his true identity, until, after the crucifixion (of Judas), some godless disciples steal his body, thus giving rise to the rumour of the resurrection. Jesus, still in the third heaven, asks God to allow him to visit his mother Mary and some of the disciples. He remains with them for three days then returns to the third heaven. Does the substitution of Judas for Jesus draw on some pre-existent tradition, or is it merely a rationalisation of the Qur'an account?

The Italian version of the Gospel is kept in Vienna, and has marginal notes in a peculiar Arabic, unlikely to be written by a native speaker, which appear to make editorial suggestions on the text. There are competing arguments for either the Spanish or the Italian version being the original, though some scholars argue for the existence of an original underlying both versions and perhaps being based on some Gnostic or other source. But no scholar has postulated a date before the 14th century for a hypothetical original, and a number of anachronisms show that the existing Gospel of Barnabas cannot possibly be ancient.

But this obviously late apocryphal work, which many would describe simply as a forgery, has become a *cause célèbre* in the world of Islam. According to Luke Montgomery, an Islamic expert who has written a thriller in which the Gospel of Barnabas plays a part,³ it's often easier to find editions of the Gospel of Barnabas in the Muslim world than the New Testament, and most educated Muslims have read it. The Gospel of Barnabas is regularly touted in the Muslim media, in much the same way that alternative theories of the life of Jesus are in the West.

The possibility of an older version of Barnabas is intriguing, but forgery is also a likely possibility. A back-translation into Syriac could feasibly have been forged into an antique manuscript that, though it wouldn't convince the experts, might be enough to satisfy wishful thinkers. Is this the case?

The codex in question is said to have been found in 2000. It is a distinctive object, written in gold ink on thick, dark animal hide pages. There is no doubt that the script is Syriac. But Syriac expert Professor Peter Williams, Warden of Tyndale House, Cambridge, pointed out to me that the manuscript shown in photos was identical to one which had turned up in February news stories, billed as a 1,500 year old Syriac



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Bible worth a potential \$28m.⁴ This "Bible" had languished for 12 years, supposedly in the Justice Palace in Ankara, after the book had been confiscated from a gang who were smuggling antiquities and firearms. It will now be displayed in the Ethnography Museum.

Although no one has been granted access to the manuscript, Peter Williams and Michael Law, another Syriac expert, were able to read the text on those pages that were visible in a video⁵ and photo stills. The visible pages are clearly the Peshitta – the traditional Syriac translation – of the Gospel of Matthew. What's more, a date is also visible: "the year 1500 of our Lord". The book doesn't look large enough to contain even the entire gospel of Matthew and there are several irregularities with the text format and seeming mistakes in the writing.

If it is a forgery, then, as Williams told me, it would require "copying out Peshitta Matthew, by someone who didn't really know what it meant, but must have been copying a manuscript so that they could get the date right", and "someone trying

NOTES

1 Brent Lauda: *Revelation of the Magi: The Last Tale of the Wise Men's Journey to Bethlehem*, HarperOne, San Francisco, 2010.

2 <http://bit.ly/LxX0n7> (dailymail.co.uk). I spoke to the author, Rob Preece, who admitted that all his sources were secondary.

3 Luke Montgomery: *A Deceit to Die For*, Ethandune Publishing, 2012.

4 <http://bit.ly/GVjVoB> (global.christianpost.com).

5 "Antique Bible Turns Up in Turkey", Euronews, <http://bit.ly/MAXk3H> (YouTube).

to make great claims about it even though they can't read it".

Thus, not only is this find not going to cause the collapse of Christianity, *none* of the claims made about it hold up. The story has little to do with Iran beyond a provocative and opportunistic newspaper headline; the book doesn't contain the Gospel of Barnabas; the Gospel of Barnabas isn't attested before the 17th century, and the Syriac manuscript, even if not a forgery, isn't particularly ancient.

It turned out to be one of those stories that unravels as you examine it, yet a core remains in the Islamic world's fascination for a piece of forged and late apocrypha. The Gospel of Barnabas is regularly produced by some Muslims as being more authentic than the Christian gospels, despite its very late provenance and internal anachronisms. It even informed a 2008 Iranian film, *The Messiah*, directed by Nader Talebzadeh. The director came up with an inspired compromise of giving the film two endings – one in which Jesus is crucified and one in which Judas is crucified: a Schrödinger's Cat solution to Christianity and Islam's differing views on the fate of Jesus. **FI**

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that stepped out
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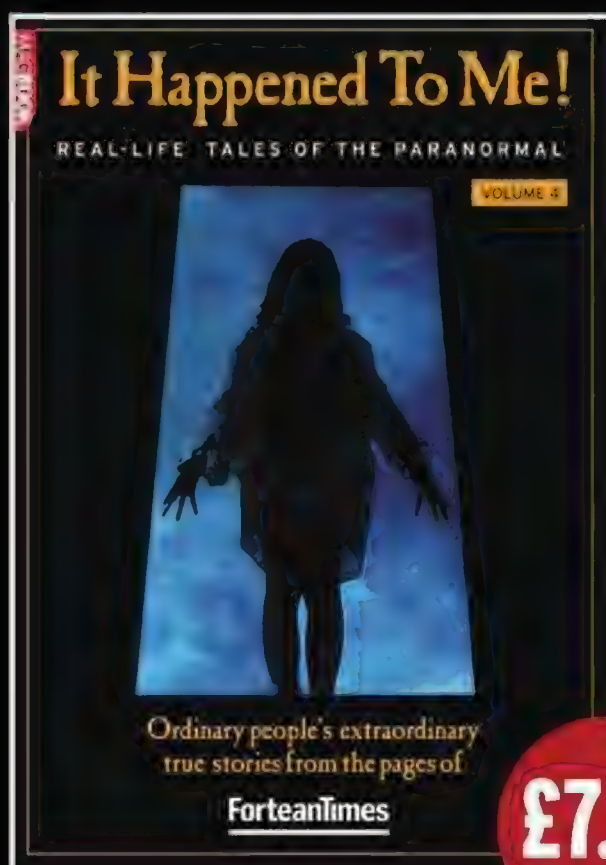


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FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £18.00

As in the Near-Death Experiences field, books on the noisy, disruptive 'spirits' we call poltergeists come thick and fast. This one, though, looks very promising, being a "history of violent ghostly phenomena".

In setting out his aims, Maxwell-Stuart acknowledges, refreshingly, just how difficult it is to categorise most accounts as 'ghosts' as "they slip between ghost, demon, spirit and a vague 'something other'" and often involve a range of manifestations including "noisy, destructive, hostile, playful, gentle, mischievous, inarticulate, scholarly, garrulous" and can involve music, explosions, levitations, teleportations, fire, stone-throwing and apports as well as non-human entities. They form at once, he says, "both a category of their own while belonging to several others".

In recent years, we have also seen poltergeist phenomena turning up within the experiences of UFO and Bigfoot witnesses. No wonder, then, that they are of primary interest to forteans.

The most refreshing aspect of this impressive survey is that

Maxwell-Stuart has resisted the more obvious approaches of organising his material simply by explanation (as, say, William Roll did), geographically (as Montague Summers did) or as a chronology (as Nandor Fodor did).

As a historian at St Andrews University and with solid books on Satan, witches and witchcraft behind him, he concentrates on presenting "reports of poltergeistery in their historical contexts and from the point of view of their authors' purpose and the interests of their readership".

This is not a substitute for a lack of opinion or used as a vehicle for condescension. Presenting such reports from antiquity to the present day in the context of their original documentation makes this a fresh and valuable study.

Consequently, Maxwell-Stuart's chapters are divided along more complex lines; correlating contemporary accounts from distinct eras with an analysis of the cultural context, he draws together relevant discussions, records and commentaries from a variety of times, countries and cultures.

For example, many early accounts were written in Latin by scholars and clerics for the edification of other scholars and clerics, and both groups had a predisposition to regard such 'intrusions' as demonic or angelic and therefore, equally, to be treated with a bit of diligence.

At the other extreme, accounts for popular consumption tended to indicate that poltergeist intrusions, like tales of ghosts and divine intervention, had some kind of purpose, such as warning against blasphemy or other serious crimes.

Certainly, in their accounts

"elves and goblins were neither part of the 'theological creation' nor of the physical world"

of ghosts and possessions in the New World, the Puritans believed themselves to be 'tested'.

So, Maxwell-Stuart takes us on a progression from the middle of the first millennium to the present, passing through periods characterised by scepticism, hostility, fear, satire, infestation, literary exploitation, lessons in morality, the search for a 'non-religious' theory, and the identification of poltergeist-prone people (whether they be troubled pubescents, the ill or the 'cursed').

Along the way, he explores some of these very interesting conjunctions; eg. "the close proximity or neighbourliness which exists between the living and the dead"; the curiously self-contained world of fairies, elves and goblins etc, who were neither part of 'theological creation' nor of the physical world; and the curious theological conundrum that asserts that demonic interference in the human world needed "God's inscrutable permission".

On this last matter – tales of what Maxwell-Stuart calls "events-with-meaning" – he believes there was an implicit understanding between authors and their audiences well into the second millennium and that was "the firm belief that everything is connected to everything else".

This view is shared by forteans today, except for the deterministic corollary that "therefore nothing happens without a reason even if that purpose cannot be detected immediately".

In the popular imagination, this view extended to incidents of good and bad luck, however mundane, and, of course, to encounters with the supernatural. Certainly, in popular lore, until such an origin or purpose is discovered, the right remedy (such as exorcism) could not be carried out.

The whole is very well and intelligently written, with no trace of condescension. This re-evaluation of old material, much of it raked over many times by earlier scholars, is given new life and makes for smooth reading; you hardly notice the meandering diversions down the byways of mediaeval beliefs.

Another of this study's strengths is Maxwell-Stuart's joy in discussing famous writers and chroniclers of ghostlore, old and new; he has an almost nonchalant way of introducing them into the discourse, which entirely instills one with confidence in his scholarship.

For those interested in the sources, he has a thorough section of notes, which even includes summaries of very interesting cases not yet fully dissected in English studies.

I thoroughly recommend *Poltergeists*; it will fascinate readers new to the subject or material, and has insights and new material to please old hands.

Bob Rickard

Fortean Times Verdict

WIDE-RANGING AND INTELLIGENT
STUDY OF NOISY SPIRITS

9

Dead stones

Stone was for ancestors and wood for the living in Madagascar – and here?



Stonehenge

Exploring the Greatest Stone Age Mystery

Mike Parker Pearson

Simon & Schuster 2012

Hb, 416pp, illus, notes, refs, bib, £25.00,
ISBN 9780857207302

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £22.00

“Organising academics” writes Mike Parker Pearson, “is about as easy as herding cats.” In his latest book, he tells the story of the Stonehenge Riverside Project, an epic programme of excavation and research that has involved coordinating hundreds of archaeologists and students which he has led since 2003. Obtaining permission to excavate in and around Stonehenge was a major achievement, for as Parker Pearson puts it: “Archaeology has been likened to a historian reading the last surviving copy of an ancient book and then tearing out and burning every page.”

This book will be the standard work on Stonehenge for many years to come. Significantly, it is subtitled ‘Exploring the greatest Stone Age mystery’ in contrast to so many lesser works that claim to have solved the mystery. The Project began with a chance remark from MPP’s fellow archaeologist Ramilisonina. In his native Madagascar, where stones are still raised as monuments to the dead, perishable materials such as wood and fabric are reserved for the living; cold, everlasting stone is exclusively for the ancestors. Ramilisonina assumed that everyone knew this. Realising that this concept could equally be applied to the monuments of Neolithic Britain, the two wrote

an academic paper outlining their theory, then set about trying to prove it.

Just a couple of miles north of Stonehenge is Durrington Walls, an enormous henge containing timber circles that were long considered as prototypes to Stonehenge’s stone circle. But if the two monuments were contemporary, and connected by the River Avon, perhaps each could have been part of one system: wood for the living, stone for the dead? Sure enough, the dates matched and a previously-unknown avenue was found, linking Durrington to the river. Houses were found too; once numbering in their hundreds, these were the homes of the people who built Stonehenge. When the village became abandoned, the henge was built around it in commemoration. Further down the Avon, the terminus of Stonehenge’s avenue was discovered, with the ghost of a circle of bluestones later removed to Stonehenge, which turns out to be a cemetery.

Refreshingly, John Michell’s and John Neal’s work on ancient metrology is acknowledged; even *Spinal Tap* gets a mention. The conundrum of bluestone movement from Wales is explored in detail, with a fair appraisal of Brian John’s glaciation theory. Several routes are proposed for the transportation of Stonehenge’s sarsens from the Avebury area, though I was disappointed to see no mention of my preferred option – that the sarsens were already at Stonehenge, but there were not enough to finish the monument. But this is a minor quibble. Parker Pearson’s book is the fullest account to date of what is known about Stonehenge and its surroundings; it should be essential reading.

Steve Marshall

Fortean Times Verdict
A MUST FOR FANS OF STONEHENGE
AND STONE AGE MONUMENTS **9**

The Calculus Diaries

A Year Discovering How Maths Can Help You Lose Weight, Win in Vegas and Survive a Zombie Apocalypse

Jennifer Ouellette

Duckworth Overlook 2011

Hb, 318pp, illus, ind, notes, appx, £12.99,
ISBN 9780715641439

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69



The mention of calculus can send a shudder down the spine of otherwise numerate scientists. Anyone who has struggled with some

of the technique’s seemingly esoteric equations will sympathise with one of Jennifer Ouellette’s friends who comments that the “polynomial monster... has hooked teeth and causes chronic yeast infections”. Ouellette manages the remarkable trick of making calculus entertaining (a conjunction of words I certainly never expected to write) and accessible. More mathematically minded readers may lament the dearth of equations, but Ouellette ensures readers grasp calculus’s basic concepts by drawing on themes as diverse as fairground rides, gambling, the *I-Ching* and zombies.

Indeed, everyone can enjoy this book, whether you know your Fourier transformation from your Gaussian distribution or barely get beyond totting up your spending. *The Calculus Diaries* covers the usual suspects, such as the row between Newton and Leibniz about who discovered calculus. But she also covers the work of Canadian epidemiologist Robert Smith? (the question mark is part of his name to differentiate himself from his namesakes) who modelled zombie outbreaks (see <http://bit.ly/bGo7wy> (mysite.science.uottawa.ca)). And she looks at the Corrupted Blood glitch that ‘killed’ countless avatars on World of Warcraft. Such examples would always appeal to my inner geek and both offer insights into the spread of serious diseases. But Ouellette even managed to retain my interest while writing about surfing and craps (dice) – two topics I’d usually be tempted to skip.

Maths teachers and lecturers could raid *The Calculus Diaries* as

a way to enliven their teaching and underscore that a differential can make a difference in everyday life. It’ll inspire mathematically or scientifically minded teenagers. And if you don’t know your differential from your integral, Ouellette opens the door a crack into a new way of looking at the world.

You probably won’t learn how to perform calculus. (*The Calculus Diaries* is an ideal companion to a ‘teach yourself’ book or CD.) But you’ll understand why calculus matters – and taming the polynomial monster’s no mean trick.

Mark Greener

Fortean Times Verdict
YAY! CALCULUS FOR EVERYONE
(INCLUDING ZOMBIES) **8**

Babel No More

Michael Erard

Free Press 2012

Hb, 306pp, illus, notes, ind, \$25.95,
ISBN 9781451628258

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £16.27



According to traditional exegesis, the original Adamic language (proto-Hebrew or proto-Arabic depending on the loyalties of the exegetes)

split into 72 languages after Babel. Current linguistic theory estimates the number of the world’s languages at 6,809 (a precision which belies the difficulties in gathering and classifying data), of which around 3,000 are on the way to extinction.

Michael Erard sets out to explore the world of the hyperpolyglot, which he defines as a person who can master more than six languages (six is his measure because multilingual cultures, where everyone speaks a number of languages, generally manage a maximum of five). There are plenty of people who claim to speak a considerably larger number and, among the giants of polyglottery, one or two of whose achievements resonate uncannily with the biblical estimate.

Erard is a linguist and rhetorician with a fascination for those whose talented tongues take them to the extremes of learning. His book is an attempt at understanding the minds (and mind-sets) of these people, while also investigating the limits and

limitations of language learning. *Babel No More* is partly an extended survey of contemporary hyperpolyglots, and partly a historical study of the most famous of European practitioners, Cardinal Giuseppe Mezzofanti (among his fans was Byron, who reputedly lost a multilingual cursing contest with the polyglot priest).

Along the way, Erard looks into language acquisition in children, bilingualism, and the major theories of language learning (Chomsky and his critics, mainly); but his focus and enthusiasm are geared to the peculiar world of the maven, who learn languages for the hell of it. Erard wants to find out what makes them tick; why they learn languages they have no practical need for. Mezzofanti is the benchmark against which he measures their achievements. What he discovers is less a cure for misunderstanding and more 'une Babel heureuse'.

In many ways, *Babel No More* is a first attempt, an initial foray into a linguistically, and psychologically, complex world. Erard does not come up with definitive answers to the conundrum of polyglottery. He finds that his subjects have limitations (most have difficulty in using more than two or three of their acquired languages at any one time) and that some are fakes and fantasists. He discovers that intellect is not a necessary prerequisite; not surprisingly, there are autistic savants among his subjects.

This book is tantalising, first because its subject is both fascinating and vague, and secondly because Erard never quite gets to grips with the core question: how do we acquire language, and what makes some people much better at it than others? His portraits of Mezzofanti and his contemporary pretenders are engaging, and reveal a tapestry of compelling eccentricities, but they are maddeningly incomplete; as if he, and his subjects, despite their eldritch talents, are ultimately lost for words.

Noel Rooney

Fortean Times Verdict

A FASCINATING INTRO TO HYPERPOLYGLOTTISM

9

The Ballet of the Planets

On the Mathematical Elegance of Planetary Motion ¹

Donald C Benson

Oxford University Press 2012

Hb, 192pp, illus, notes, ind, £22.50, ISBN 9780199891009

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £20.25



Virtually all branches of modern physics involve the development of mathematical models to describe physical processes. But for almost a thousand years, the idea that the natural world could be understood in mathematical terms was limited to just one subject: planetary motion.

Anyone interested in the history of science will already be familiar with the long, slow progress from Aristotle's Earth-centred view, through Ptolemy's complex system of epicycles to the Sun-centred models of Copernicus and Kepler.

What is unique about this book is the way it goes into painstaking technical detail about the various theories that fell by the wayside. These are presented, not as they would have been formulated by their originators, but in terms of modern mathematical notation and diagrams.

It's obvious the author is an enthusiast for his subject, and the result is a book that will appeal to fellow enthusiasts. While the narrative passages are chatty and easy to read, they are interspersed with in-depth technical discussions that can be heavy-going. The mathematics is largely just simple geometry, with very little algebra, but it may still be enough to put off casual readers.

For anyone with a keen interest in astronomy, geometry, and the history of science, however, the book will be a must-read.

Andrew May

Note

1 This subtitle appears inside the book and on the cover. On Amazon and the OUP site, it appears as 'A Mathematician's Musings on the Elegance of Planetary Motion'.

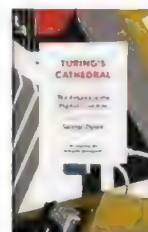
Fortean Times Verdict

A LOVINGLY PRODUCED BOOK BUT FOR ENTHUSIASTS ONLY

8

Digital history

Von Neumann, with his interplanetary machine, makes up for Turing's absence



Turing's Cathedral

The Origins of the Digital Universe

George Dyson

Allen Lane 2012

Hb, 401pp, illus, notes, ind, £25.00,

ISBN 9780713997507

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £22.50

Despite its title, Alan Turing doesn't get much of a look-in here, as Dyson is actually exploring a very different strand of digital history, that of the work John von Neumann and colleagues carried out at Princeton's Institute of Advanced Study from the late 1940s onwards. Turing's ideas hover over the book like some sort of presiding deity, but his work in the UK and war effort at Bletchley Park hardly get a mention.

Von Neumann is probably most familiar to FT readers as the originator of the idea of the Von Neumann machine, a theoretical self-replicating automaton, posited by some as the ideal device for interplanetary exploration, but in the late 1940s he was engrossed in creating the imaginatively named 'Electronic Computer Project' (EPC), which was one of the key strands leading to modern computing. It was, it has to be said, not a popular project at the institute, given that it

was military-funded and intended to predict the effects of nuclear explosions, but von Neumann pushed it onward even in the face of opposition from Einstein and other Institute luminaries, and in doing so created the basis for modern computing.

George Dyson is the son of one of the Institute's most noted researchers, Freeman Dyson (of Dyson Sphere fame), and grew up in its intellectual atmosphere, so is very well placed to understand the context of the story and the characters involved. In writing about von Neumann, he takes the opportunity to cast his net wider and explore the lives of many of the extraordinary people in the Institute's orbit, and while this is fascinating, it is also one of the book's weaknesses.

Dyson tends to get caught up in irrelevant detail of minor players' lives, and tells us more than we could possibly want to know about them, which, along with his interest in setting the whole enterprise in its cultural context, makes for a rather baggy book.

Nonetheless, the core story and the character of von Neumann are just about enough to keep the thing together, and Dyson is a fluent and formidable writer with a strong grasp of his subject, so despite these caveats, it is still a fascinating read, telling a rather neglected story from the origins of our modern world.

Ian Simmons

Fortean Times Verdict

CURIOUS ABOUT VON NEUMANN'S SELF-REPLICATING AUTOMATON?

5

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True Renaissance man

New books about Dr Dee provide new information about the Elizabethan polymath as a magus and as a London family man



The Arch-Conjuror of England

John Dee

Glyn Parry

Yale University Press 2012

Hb, 347pp, illus, notes, ind, £25.00/\$55.00, ISBN 9780300117196

FORTANE TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £22.50

John Dee of Mortlake

Nicholas Dakin

Barnes and Mortlake Historical Society 2011

Pb, 95pp, illus, bib, ind, £7.90, ISBN 9780954203863

AVAILABLE FROM THE PUBLISHER

In many ways, Dr John Dee and his career are too large a subject for a single book, so to have two new volumes, each concentrating on differing aspects, is most welcome. Similarly, attitudes to Dee (1527–1609) have varied wildly over the years, from the easily-duped sorcerer to the Hermetic scholar, to proto-scientist and all-round Renaissance man. In some ways, Glyn Parry's biography takes us back to the first of these interpretations, though he places Dee firmly in the occult-obsessed society of his time.

One of the great polymaths of his age, with possibly the largest library in England, Dee mastered mathematics, navigation, astronomy, calendar reform and civil law, amongst much else; and also astrology, alchemy and angel magic. Apparently believing that his intellectual talents should have been enough on their own, however, he never quite got to grips with the politics of the Tudor court and the religious controversies of the time, leaving him floundering for patronage and frequently at odds with the spiritual establishment.

Parry has uncovered new material, showing how a number of high-ranking courtiers, and even Elizabeth I herself, took an interest in alchemy and the occult philosophy of the time. In such an environment, the self-promoting Dee did well enough in the early part of Elizabeth's reign, but tensions between Catholics and Protestants and the slanders of competing occultists drove Dee to make some ill-advised choices, resulting in loss of patronage, misguided European adventures and a miserable old age, far from both the court and the centres of intellectual life; and, besides, always having to defend himself against charges of sorcery.

The book attempts to put to bed a number of myths, such as the plundering of his Mortlake home by an angry mob and the idea that Dee was a secret agent for Francis Walsingham. It also provides fascinating detail on Dee's occult competitors and the world he moved in, and the religious controversies that led to a reaction against magic, leaving the good doctor high and dry.

Readers of an occult inclination will be disappointed, however, to find no mention of the Enochian alphabet and language, or any significant discussion of the more mystical content produced in the scrying sessions carried out by Dee and Edward Kelley; the angelic revelations are really only mentioned insofar as they affected the day-to-day actions of the protagonists and the larger arc of their wanderings round Europe. By sidestepping what many would regard as the most interesting – and perhaps the most important – products of the Dee-Kelley relationship, Parry appears to return to the century-old view that Kelley was a fraud and Dee his dupe. This is regrettable for, as we know from studies of other mediums and prophets, fraud and honest revelation are frequently mingled

together in interesting ways, and to predict events that fail to come to pass isn't, in itself, a token of insincerity. Considering Parry's avowed intent to place Dee in the occult context of his time, this failure to get to grips with the more idiosyncratic content of his occult beliefs is, perhaps, the book's main failing, even though it remains a valuable addition to our knowledge of Dee.

Other faults are comparatively minor, such as Parry's continual desire to emphasise where he has uncovered new material, which becomes a mite tedious after a while. The title, originating as it does from one of Dee's slanderers, does its subject something of a disservice, and the writing often assumes some background knowledge of the period that many general readers simply will not have. And while the book is fully annotated, with 46 pages of small-type notes, many drawing on original manuscripts and publications of the period, the lack of a formal bibliography of modern scholarship is regrettable.

Dakin's short book, being far less ambitious, succeeds rather better. It provides a concise life of Dee, then concentrates on his Mortlake background, with chapters on his house, the set-up of his household (and particularly the part played in it by his wife Jane) and his library. A chronology and John Aubrey's rambling notes about Dee from his *Brief Lives* round out the book, which is excellently annotated and heavily illustrated with maps and pictures, including an apparent drawing of Dee's house. A fascinating addition to our understanding of Dee the man, rather than the magus.

Steve Moore

Fortean Times Verdict

PARRY: EXCELLENT NEW MATERIAL, SLIGHTLY FLAWED
DAKIN: LOCAL HISTORY WRITING AT ITS FINEST

8
9

Love and Monsters

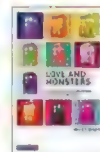
The Doctor Who Experience, 1979 to the Present

Miles Booy

IB Tauris 2012

Pb, 236pp, bib, ind, £14.99, ISBN 9781848854791

FORTANE TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £13.49



Miles Booy's aim is "to trace the development of discourse surrounding DW from 1979", when *Doctor Who Weekly* first appeared.

(FT is cited as the source for its Fantastic Facts).

Nevertheless (or happily – I prefer the old to the new, though I still watch in the hope of understanding a Russell Davies plot), he reaches back to 1963. No detail of DW fandom is too small to pinpoint. One reels under the avalanche while admiring his research. Occasionally, Homer nods: "Tomb of the Cybermen" was rediscovered in Hong Kong in 1991 and twice released on DVD.

Missing episodes (one turned up in 1996 (in the Australian censor's archives), as did Malcolm Hulke's 'Marxist' screenplays), and links to other programmes deserve more attention: Autons were surely influenced by *The Avengers*'s "Cybernauts"; "The Gunfighters" prefigures *Star Trek*'s "Spectre of the Gun".

Booy is excellent on how 'novelisations' add to and subtract from the original scripts. His style has brio and wit, but is also infected by hyper-academic absurdities – for goodness sake, it's only a TV entertainment!

Major actors/characters are omitted and chance items included in the index; there are some false page references. Readers may regret the lack of illustrations.

I'll add my local 'Ice Lords of Calgary' to Booy's round-up of international fan clubs and answer his three open questions:

- Best Doctor: *Hartnell*. Worst: *McGann*
- Best Episode: *Logopolis*
- W's intended audience: *Then: a children's programme parents peeked at. Now: the reverse.*

Barry Baldwin

Fortean Times Verdict

FULL MARKS ON BOOY'S TERMS, BUT FOR THOSE WITH A LIFE?

10

ALSO RECEIVED

We leaf through a small selection of the dozens of books that have arrived at Fortean Towers in recent months...

RIVER MONSTERS

Jeremy Wade

Swordfish (orionbooks.co.uk) 2011
Hb, pp304, refs, illus, £18.99
ISBN 9780857820006

Wade, a zoologist and teacher, presented two TV documentaries on jungle fishing and went on to present *River Monsters* for the Discovery Channel. He admits it became an obsession for him to track down the largest, meanest – and often the most primitive – river-dwelling fish. This is his account of his adventures during the making of the series – in the rivers of the Congo, Amazon, Alaska, Australia and the Himalayas – often by following up native rumours of a fearsome predator in local waters. We've covered many 'big fish' stories over the years in *FT*; here are some, well presented, that didn't get away.

HOW TO SNOG A HAGFISH: DISGUSTING THINGS IN THE SEA

Jonathan Evers

Adlard Coles Nautical, 2012
Pb, 96pp, illus, index, £7.99
ISBN 9781408140420

Plumbing the ocean's mysterious depths, Evers emerges with an impressive catch of underwater oddities in this slim but fact-packed volume. He acknowledges that disgust may be an evolutionary hangover meant to protect us from contaminants, but is canny enough to realise that the natural world's seemingly limitless capacity to produce spectacular gross-outs is a great hook for getting younger readers – at whom this irritatingly and inexplicably titled book is aimed – to pick up a book about sea life. So what you get is a kind of 'Horrible Natural Histories', dealing with some of the weirder denizens of the deep and their often unpleasant strategies for survival. These can be defensive – like the titular hagfish's ability to produce bucketloads of mucus and tie itself in a knot – or offensive, like the same creature's

habit of entering its larger prey through the gills and eating it from the inside. How things eat other things (disgustingly) is a constant theme, as are the many forms of parasitism among marine creatures; but not everything in the book is as disgusting as its title would lead you to believe. Evers also celebrates the sheer, mind-boggling strangeness of underwater life, like the unlikely symbiotic alliances between gobies and pistol shrimps or the sex lives of seahorses. Quite rightly, he saves a special place for the most disgusting of all things in the sea – human beings – pointing out that we will most likely precipitate a mass extinction of ocean life, through overfishing, fertiliser use and excess carbon production, with probably catastrophic results. Despite such a gloomy conclusion, Evers manages to convey an infectious enthusiasm for the bizarre and wonderful richness of marine ecosystems and their often unprepossessing but always fascinating inhabitants. A nice little book for youngsters with a budding interest in natural history.

GHOSTS ALONG THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

Alan Brown

University Press of Mississippi
(upress.state.ms.us) 2011
Pb, pp238, index, refs, £19.99
ISBN 9781617031441

In North America, the Mississippi River is second only to the Missouri in length, but its tributaries flow from 10 other states, making its drainage basin cover 40 per cent of the area of the USA. Amerinds called it "the Father of Waters" and its rich history of ghost stories, dating back to pre-Civil War explorations, is catalogued here in some detail. Brown, a professor of English at the University of West Alabama – with four previous and well-received studies of ghost narratives of the American South from the same publisher – writes easily and knowledgeably, without any sociological jargon.

A DICTIONARY OF CELTIC SAINTS

Elizabeth Rees

The History Press, 2012
Pb, 160, illus, maps, biblio, index, £14.99
ISBN 9780752463056

Catholic nun Elizabeth Rees has written widely on Celtic saints and here offers what she claims is the first fully illustrated dictionary of their lives. It isn't, the author admits, a comprehensive work, more of "a taster". There's a brief introduction outlining the history of Celtic Christianity and the nature of the monastic communities it gave rise to. The bulk of the book is a straightforward A–W (Andornán to Winwaloe) of entries for over 100 saints, distilling what

we know of their lives, citing the relevant hagiographical sources and pointing out where these stray from the probably factual to the frankly fantastic. All of this is useful – although regional specialists will miss some of their local saints – but the book's strong point is its linking of these fascinating, but inescapably distant, figures with the actual places where they wandered, settled, worked and died. This provides a good selection of holy wells, cave chapels, standing stones, Celtic crosses and mediæval churches – nearly all illustrated by way of black and white photos or colour plates – that one can visit today, whether for pilgrimage, research or just a nice day out.

FORTEAN FICTION

Alderney: The Devil's Rock

Dr. Lazarus Ravenscroft and Captain Ulysses Black

Aranta House 2011
Pb, 293pp, illus, notes, bib, £15
ISBN 9780957017900



This tiny Channel Island, only three and a half miles (5.6km) long and taking some grim pride in its self-assessment of "two thousand alcoholics clinging to a rock", is certainly due for a history, occult or otherwise. Unfortunately, this book isn't it. Describing itself as "an uncompromising foray into the strange world of cryptotheology", it's weird beyond belief, but not always in a good way.

Taking the coy, Steampunk-influenced vogue for mock-Victorian long-windedness to new extremes, its 300 pages (which should have been mercilessly edited) serve up endless anecdotes of ghosts, pagan traditions and inappropriate trysts, leading the authors, Dr Lazarus Ravenscroft and Captain Ulysses Black (!) to speculate that we could be looking at the original model for *The Wicker Man*. I, though no historian, lived on Alderney for three years and never heard any of these myths and fables, except for the innocuous 'Milk-O-Punch Sunday', a springtime celebration in which unpasteurised milk is added to sea gull eggs and herbs and spices to fuel a free-roaming piss-up round the Island; it never ended in human sacrifice to my knowledge.

Alderney is a strange, fogbound place, and the islanders do drink too much, occasionally indulge in inappropriate sexual liaisons, and have a rather casual attitude to death, but this could apply to many isolated and bored communities around the British Isles. This book, with its cod-Lovecraftian stylings, is probably a result of those endless, isolated, island nights (I've seen fisherman throwing their wages on the fire in the pub, just for a laugh). Whatever it may be, Alderney most certainly isn't The Devil's Rock!

Tim Weinberg

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THE EDITOR, **FORTEAN TIMES**, DENNIS CONSUMER DIVISION,
30 CLEVELAND STREET, LONDON W1T 4JD, UK.



The Amazing Spider-Man

Dir Marc Webb, US 2012
Now on general release

What's a megacorp to do when one of its most successful franchises hits the rocks? If you're a McDonalds or a Starbucks, you strip down, refurbish and refresh, and that's exactly what Sony has done with Spiderman, who is now officially 'Amazing'. So now we return to the beginning, again, revisiting Spidey's origins like a familiar room in a dream: everything here is the same, yet everything is slightly different.

British actor Andrew Garfield's Spidey 3.0 (let's not forget Nicholas Hammond) is still an awkward outsider played by a man 10 years older than he's pretending to be, but he's also a geekily-handsome, cocky science genius who doesn't need superpowers to draw the attentions of new-old love interest Gwen Stacey (Emma Stone). There's a touch of Matt Smith's Doctor Who in the Garfield mix, and he makes for an engaging super-human, with the emphasis placed, as always, on the human. Elsewhere on the acting front, Martin Sheen displays a gentle gravitas as Uncle Ben, while Rhys Ifans as Spidey's would-be-benefactor-turned-would-be-nemesis Dr Connors/The Lizard, makes for a memorable monster, even if his mad scientist doesn't have much more to do or say than his many forebears.

The action set pieces are as impressive as one would hope, and are efficiently handled by director Marc Webb and team, meaning that they can be followed by those over 14 years of age. Spidey treats New York City as a parkour playground for the super-human, though he does have to enlist the help of the crane-operators' union before he's really swinging, reminding us that Spiderman isn't amazing because he's a lone Nietzschean übermensch – he needs all the help he can get. The film overflows with positive social messages: Peter Parker is constantly reminded of his growing responsibilities as a young adult, and of the consequences of his actions, both positive and negative. We also learn that, hey, sometimes it's OK to be wrong: Denis Leary as Gwen's cop dad realises that he was mistaken in his assumptions about both Spiderman and Peter Parker, while even The Lizard is given an opportunity to apologise and admit that his plan to turn everyone into lizard-people was ill-considered and obnoxious.

The Amazing Spiderman isn't perfect, in fact it's not even Amazing, and I'm not sure if it's better than Raimi's, but it's likeable, engaging, spectacular and, even at 136 minutes, sleekly efficient.

Mark Pilkington

Fortean Times Verdict

HARDLY AMAZING, BUT THE NEW SPIDEY ENTERTAINS

7

Corman's World: Exploits of a Hollywood Rebel

Dir Alex Stapleton, US 2011
Anchor Bay, £15.99/£19.99

This is a superb, affectionate and engaging account of the career highs and lows of low-budget monster-movie maker Roger Corman, who quite deliberately carved out a path through Hollywood on his own terms. Along the way, he gave opportunities to some of the film world's biggest names, including directors Peter Bogdanovich, Ron Howard, Joe Dante, Martin Scorsese and Jonathan Demme, and stars Jack Nicholson, Bruce Dern and William Shatner.

Shatner appeared in Corman's *The Intruder*, an anti-racism film that was a million miles away from the director's usual drive-in exploitation fare like *Attack of the Crab Monsters* and *Not of This Earth*. Shatner played a segregationist who stirs up a small town. A good deal of the documentary is devoted to this still underrated film that saw Corman and his brother Gene gamble with their own money to make an important movie they believed in.

Among the many starry talking heads paying tribute to the king of exploitation is Jack Nicholson, who has a genuinely emotional moment on camera as he realises how much his career owes to the start that Corman gave him in efforts like

The Little Shop of Horrors and *The Terror*.

This is a welcome overview of an often overlooked, but important type of filmmaking. It's a shame that so much of it has to be devoted to Corman's (then) most-recent work, shooting a Syfy Channel monster-movie-of-the-week called *Dinoshark* that is clearly not a patch on his earlier, cheaper, and far more enjoyable outings.

Brian J Robb

Fortean Times Verdict

WELCOME TRIBUTE TO THE LOW BUDGET MASTER

8

Return of the Living Dead

Dir Dan O'Bannon, US 1985
Second Sight, £19.99/£22.99

A couple of bored workers at a medical supplies warehouse accidentally cause the leak of a toxic chemical that reanimates the dead. Oh, and they happen to be right next to the cemetery. It sounds like the plot to any other zombie knock off, but since its release in 1985, *Return of the Living Dead* has always been something special.

Dan O'Bannon, the writer of *Alien*, *Dark Star* and *Dead and Buried*, is the real secret of the film's success. He directs with a madcap horror energy, but also offers a screenplay that is laugh-out-loud funny. Very few can strike that elusive balance between horror and comedy, but O'Bannon does so with real success.

While not all the special effects hold up today, some definitely do. Especially the EC Comics style 'Tar-Man'. It's one of the most imaginative zombie designs ever filmed. There's also a moment when the emaciated half corpse of a naked zombie is strapped to a mortuary table. As she drips spinal fluid she explains (yes, these zombies can speak) that the reason she wants to eat live brains is because it lessens the pain of being dead. In other words, zombies are conscious of their condition. Or as she puts it, "I can feel myself rot". It's just one example of the film's nutty inventiveness.

The actors really pull it off too. And while a group of young punks who get caught up in the action do a decent enough job, it's the older characters who leave a lasting

impression. Clu Galager is a riot as straight-faced boss Burt, who's terrified a zombie outbreak will affect his business. (At one point, he insists some bagged up and wriggling body parts are actually rabid weasels). But it's James Karen who steals the show as supervisor Frank, the guy who causes the leak in the first place. His fun-loving dialogue in the brilliant first 10 minutes is both endearing and hilarious. He follows that with squealing over-the-top freak-outs as the zombie crisis gets progressively worse. Then, later in the film, Karen has the audacity to throw in a genuinely moving moment at a crematorium furnace (that scene was his idea). What could have been a perfunctory role for 'generic older guy in a teen horror' turns out to be one of the highlights of the film.

It came out in the same year as Romero's sadly underrated *Day of the Dead*, which is certainly a much more thoughtful and 'interesting' film. But *Return of the Living Dead* is such high-octane fun that it's no shock it trounced Romero's offering at the box office in 1985. True, the film flags a little in the third act, but never for too long. Yes, the punk soundtrack sounds dated today, and the sudden ending might irritate some viewers. But the film worked then, and it works now, remaining unique and influential, even today.

This two-disc Special Edition is loaded with over five hours of extras, including the previously available but still excellent two-hour documentary *More Brains*.

Rev. Peter Laws

Fortean Times Verdict

O'BANNON'S SPECIAL BLEND OF HORROR AND COMEDY

8

Crows Zero

Dir Takashi Miike, Japan 2007
MVM Entertainment, £15.99

Anyone expecting another *Ichii the Killer* from the legendary Takashi Miike is going to be disappointed. This is an adaptation of Hiroshi Takahashi's best-selling manga series, *Crows*, set in a school where every day is a fight for survival. It makes Lindsey Anderson's worst nightmares seem as troubling as a St Trinian's movie.

Suzuran Senior High School for Boys seems to have no lessons except fighting on the timetable, and that's before the Yakuza turn up seeking to recruit the most promising

hard cases. Neat premise; lots of violence – so what's the problem? Well, the spectacle of pretty boys battering each other senseless for hours, then hugging and wearing their bruises with pride, is wearing, to say the least; not to mention gayer than a skip through the bluebell woods. The humour is equally tiresome; one gangster comes in his pants just thinking about girls, so a brothel scene is either hilarious or pitiful, depending on your tastes.

There are no adults in this world, just boys fighting, fighting, fighting to the strains of MTV streetbeat-type dross. *Crows Zero* would like to bridge the gulf between *Battle Royale* and *Fight Club* and cult and mainstream, but it's just dull.

Tim Weinberg

Fortean Times Verdict

TIRESOME FISTICUFFS AND LAME HUMOUR FROM MIIKE

3

Crows Zero II

Dir Takashi Miike, Japan 2009
MVM Entertainment, £15.99

Takashi Miike's fascination with violence as a form of emotional self-expression is all over this sequel to *Crows Zero*, which picks up where the last film left off.

The uneasy truce between the Suzuran All Boys High School and the Hosen Academy is broken by Suzuran's new leader (for reasons too tiresome to go into), thus unleashing a relentless display of raging male hormones. Presumably all this is a way of expressing individuality in a repressive Japanese society: cue posy emo-anst in which there is lots of staring up from under floppy quiffs followed by sudden screaming and charging.

There is some dialogue amid the almost endless fisticuffs, a graffiti-daubed, grungy urban backdrop which is at least atmospheric and a deeply unfunny side-plot (yes, the would-be loveable hair-trigger gangster again). Things culminate in a final rolling half-hour brawl. If, however, you have been lucky enough to have seen *The Raid*, the fight sequences are unimaginative and, frankly, cream puff stuff in comparison.

Nick Ćirković

Fortean Times Verdict

AND, SADLY, JUST MORE OF THE SAME...

3

SHORTS

THE HOUSE

(MVM Entertainment, £15.99)



Another effectively creepy and atmospheric production from Thailand, *The House* is an old-school haunted-house movie that owes something to both its American forerunners (*Amityville Horror*, *The Shining*) and recent Japanese horror (*The Grudge*). Also – unsurprisingly these days – it's the all-pervasive camcorder

which captures the paranormal events unfolding. TV journalist Shalinee (Thai actress and pop star Inthira Chaloenpura), has a hellish vision of a house that has seen more than its fair-share of brutal murders and (naturally) decides to investigate. One would think seeing the words "Don't come in" writing themselves in blood on the walls would be taken as a warning by most people; but this is a horror film, and thankfully one that manages to transcend its own modest ambitions. Getting progressively more surreal and hallucinatory before taking a violent final turn towards more visceral *Hellraiser* territory, *The House* offers much to enjoy and comes recommended.

TW 8/10

STRIPPERS VS. WEREWOLVES

(Kaleidoscope Home Entertainment, £12.99/£17.99)



Call me paranoid, but I sometimes wonder whether there's some sort of competition among film directors to deliberately produce the worst film imaginable... You guessed it, *Strippers Vs. Werewolves* is yet another strong contender for that dubious honour. The titular (sorry) Strippers are all *Hollyoaks* cast-offs and/or *Nuts* magazine pin-ups; the Werewolves,

past-it actors-for-hire: Robert Englund, Steven Berkoff and some ex-*Eastenders* mockney gangsters. So bad it really *isn't* good, a film with a title like this should at least be awash with sex and violence. This has neither; although it does boast make-up of the pubes-glued-to-the-face variety, making the baddies look more like wereshrews. "Stripping has never been this hairy," the blurb announces; but I know (and have seen) otherwise. **TW 3/10**

PLAYBACK

(G2 Pictures, £15.99)



Playback never gets any more disturbing and nasty than in its opening scene: a grainy video of a young mother, crawling on the floor, covered in blood and begging for the life of her baby. The footage is the source of the horror buried in the town's past and uncovered by a group of high school students in their attempts to make a horror movie. Christian Slater plays a local cop investigating a missing teen; but he also has a penchant for buying recordings (from a local delinquent) of schoolgirls secretly filmed undressing in a locker room. Forget about any sort of sophisticated interplay between voyeuristic audience and possessed protagonists, with evil leaping in via the medium of video equipment. Think *Ringu*, *Shocker* and so on, with a third act *Halloween*-style survival slasher scenario thrown in for good measure. Slater completely wasted, and a 'dark' it-isn't-really-over-shit-maybe-there-could-be-a-sequel-here ending and the last thing you'll want after watching this derivative horror mish-mash is any playback.

NČ 3/10



Spec Ops: The Line

PC, Xbox360, PS3, £39.99, Yager/2K Games

Spec Ops: The Line is nothing if not narratively ambitious, being inspired by Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Coppola's *Apocalypse Now!* The storyline of this third-person shooter centres on Captain Martin Walker, sent into a storm-devastated Dubai with his Delta Force team to track down decorated officer Colonel Konrad (geddit?) after his disappearance, as well as to rescue survivors from the sand-blasted catastrophe. As Walker and his team venture

deeper into Dubai, the evidence of Konrad's atrocities – against the populace he was initially sent to protect – unfold before them with savage clarity. Despite their rescue mission, Walker and his team are about as welcome here as a glass full of sand.

To say that all is not quite as it seems with *Spec Ops: The Line* is something of an understatement. The level of depth and intrigue in the storyline is impressive, the voiceovers offer cinematic professionalism and flair, the environment is vividly realised with heightened contrasts

between a sandy hell and vividly colourful interiors, while the game's multiple endings add to an immersive experience. What somewhat undermines this sophistication is the gameplay itself, which by definition must come first in any video game. Controls are recognisably vanilla for what is essentially a cover-based game. Playing it on the PC, I found no issues with sliding into cover then vaulting over it to move forward, all of which allows for a slick experience in firefights. The prerequisite, pulsing, blood-stained framed screen is in attendance, so while your battered health undergoes rejuvenation, it's a case of head down and wait it out, relying mostly on Lugo and Adams in Walker's team to keep you alive. Ammo is limited, which can mean lots of in-fight scavenging.

Even allowing for *Gears of War*, the wow-factor of cover-based shooters has long since faded; *Rainbow Six: Vegas* got it pretty damn straight, and, besides the ability to slide, nothing much has moved on from there. But what *Spec Ops: The Line* does do is add interesting variables to the bouts of fighting punctuating the narrative. For instance, your vision is sometimes limited by sandstorms; the AI doesn't

always just stand there ducking and diving until you take its head off; and, what's more, *melée* and grenade attacks make it imperative for you to stay mobile. Amid it all, the combat stress experienced by Walker and his men takes an implacable toll and you soon find yourself on the way to becoming another Konrad.

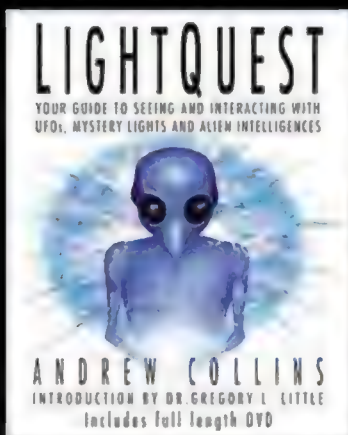
The sense of variable outcomes resulting from moral decisions and violent actions carried out in the heat of the moment is, though, largely illusory, because ultimately the outcome has been no more affected by what has transpired across the arc of your in-game involvement than were the two choices the original *Half-Life* allowed you to make all those years ago.

That's not to diminish what *Spec Ops: The Line* gets right; which is, after all, much more than it gets wrong. The gameplay and controls on PC are fluid and only add to the storyline experience, which sometimes reaches the level of the outstanding.

Nick Čirković

Fortean Times Verdict
NOT TOP OF THE LINE PERHAPS, BUT STILL SOMETHING SPECIAL **7**

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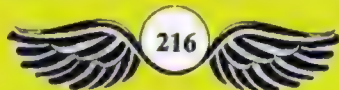
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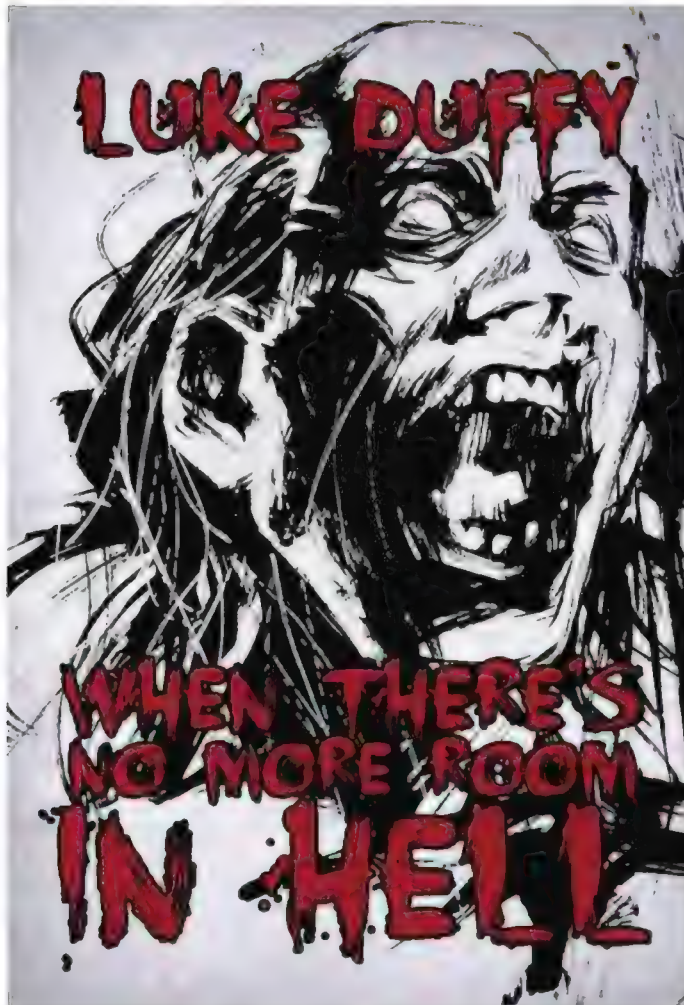
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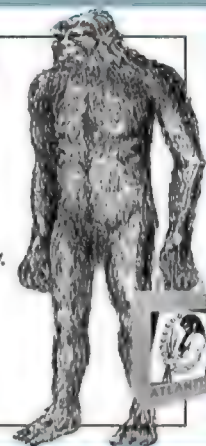
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Dear FT...

letters



Faking death

Duncan E Turner's article on Amelia Earhart [FT289:38-43] made me realise that her disappearance is almost certainly the original and first example of what I call FODLOI conspiracy theories – as in Faked Own Death, Living On Island. These are not always seriously advanced but reports at the time stated that an entire tribe in the Far East believed Bruce Lee was a FODLOI case, and it is also a subset of the wider 'Elvis Lives' theories. Of course, it may be funny to make jokes about Lord Lucan racing James Dean around this island, Dean on a motorbike and Lucan riding Shergar, but there is at least one real case. Disgraced MP John Stonehouse faked his own death in 1974 [FT263:40], though he chose a rather larger Pacific Island as a hideout – Australia – than the type usually suspected in FODLOI theories.

What is interesting about FODLOI beliefs is that they never seem to attach to figures where there is a juicier theory to follow. Thus Marilyn Monroe was killed by the CIA or FBI for her affair with JFK, and MI6 did for Diana and Dodi, even though all of these people might have had good reason to want to get away from the public eye by arranging a FODLOI.

There was one point about Turner's article that I believe needs correcting though. I don't remember seeing Amelia Earhart or Fred Noonan specifically named at the end of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, although there may have been pilots that could have fitted the bill. It would have been impossible for them to have been returned in 1977, though, because as every *Star Trek* fan knows, Earhart and Noonan are currently in stasis on a planet in the Delta Quadrant awaiting discovery by the crew of the *USS Voyager* in a couple of centuries' time.

Steve Wilson
London

Life misunderstood

In Steve Marshall's interesting article on Rupert Sheldrake [FT286:38-40], the first of Sheldrake's '10 dogmata' struck a chord.

Regarding the mechanical view of everything, proponents of artificial intelligence appear to have completely failed to appreciate life – not just its phenomenal complexity, but the fundamental difference between a living creature and a machine (no matter how intricate its construction). The best efforts of science can't produce a machine anything like as subtle as even a fungus gnat, either mechanically, or in terms of how it thinks (and all creatures are conscious, to some extent: they feel. Hunger, pleasure, pain – none of these sensations could ever be programmed into a computer).

The gap between what AI enthusiasts think consciousness is, and what it actually is, is vast beyond the size of the Universe. Some of them (maybe even most of them) really do believe themselves to be "nothing but... complex machine[s]". In other words, just so many noughts and ones.

Subscribers to such a mechanistic world-view might consider the price placed on human dexterity. To build robots that could stack shelves or stitch footballs together, for example, would cost millions of pounds, yet humans are paid a pittance for performing these seemingly simple tasks. Scientists can barely construct a robot that can walk properly, let alone one that can ride a bike, juggle, wallpaper the living room, or even poach an egg.

It's a sad fact that, in universities across the globe, people are paid to continue banging their heads against a computer screen trying to find the philosopher's stone, i.e. to instil consciousness in a collection of plastic and metal. They should be made to write out, 10 million times, "I am not a computer".

James Dixon
Fallowfield, Manchester

Baseball

Geoff Clinton wonders about a pre-Jane Austen reference to baseball [FT289:70]. He is on the right track. The first mention occurs in John Newberry's *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* (1744 – text online). Next comes a letter (1748 of Lady Hervey, describing the Prince of

Simulacra Corner



Anthony Walton stumbled upon this queenly simulacrum while helping out the RSPB at the Hay on Wye Festival on 3 June 2012.

He comments: "It seemed a particularly apt simulacrum for the day, as it was Jubilee Sunday – although the consensus in the pub was that it was more Queen Victoria than Elizabeth II."

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures. Send them to the PO box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to siekings@forteantimes.com – please tell us your postal address and we'll send you an exclusive Fortean Times gift.

Wales playing it. William Bray's Diary entry for Easter Monday 1755 describes a match at Guilford, Surrey. A book on sports by German Johann Gutmut (1795) lays down the rules for 'Englische Base-Ball'.

Barry Baldwin
By email

Veg predator?

In his article on cryptozoology [FT289:50], the Hierophant's Apprentice lists the West African kikiyaon as a "carnivorous owl". Scary. But from a cryptozoological viewpoint, a

vegetarian owl would be rather more interesting, wouldn't it?
Nils Erik Grande
Oslo, Norway

Guinea pig query

Can anyone tell me how a guinea pig came to be one of the Burmese astrological signs? The invention of these signs is reputed to date back to ancient times; but as far as I know, guinea pigs only live in South America and are not known in Asia.

Mary Derriman
Bocking, Essex

Global rainbow

I suspect that the image used to illustrate the "Heavens Above!" section of "the UFO file" [FT288:28] needs a little explanation. The article describes a fireball meteor observed above northern England on 3 March 2012. The photograph, taken at Whitley Bay, apparently shows this phenomenon, in which case viewers might be excused for assuming that the meteor manifested as an amazing beam of rainbow lights shooting across the night sky. In fact this is an artwork by Yvette Mattern called "Global Rainbow", shown at various venues in celebration of the Olympiad. It was temporarily installed at St Mary's Lighthouse, Whitley Bay, whence it shone southwards onto the coast. According to Alan Sykes on the *Guardian's* Northern Blog for 1 March: "Depending on where you were standing, you either saw the rainbow spectrum clearly arcing overhead, or, from a different angle, they fused together to form a blur of colour, turning into a white arc from further off. Although billed as only being visible for the five miles [8km] or so of North Tyneside's coastline, apparently there were reports of it being seen as far as Sunderland, about 15 miles [24km] to the south."

It was there from 1 March to 4 March, which is no doubt why so many people were looking at the sky on 3 March. I assume that in your photo, said meteor is the (relatively) unimpressive white streak to the right of the rainbow beams.

Gail-Nina Anderson

By email



John Dickson Carr

In his article on John Dickson Carr ("The Locked Room mysteries", FT288:55), Andrew May says that "there is no place in his world for the truly supernatural". While it's perhaps possible to argue that position from Carr's novels, it doesn't take into account his short stories, specifically "Blind Man's Hood", which is considered by the cognoscenti to be one of the greatest ghost stories ever written in the MR James tradition.

"Blind Man's Hood" first appeared in 1940 in Carr's (as Carter Dickson) collection *The Department of Queer Complaints*. Another story in that book, "Persons or Things Unknown", underlines the fact that Carr was an MR James enthusiast as, although a non-supernatural tale, it features a diary of a Mr Everard Poynter (see MR James's "The Diary of Mr Poynter"). "Blind Man's Hood" is about an unexplained death – I understand it attempts to solve an actual, historical case: the "Peasehall Mystery" – but it includes a truly terrifying ghost that is neither rationalised nor capable of being rationalised.

One scene is as good as, if not better than, MR James at his

best. During a game of Blind Man's Buff in a country house, the revenant of a woman takes terrible revenge on the man, Wilkes, who had allowed her to die in horrible circumstances. The ghost, appearing as 'it' in the game, and wearing a "pillow-cover" in lieu of the more standard blindfold, is not recognised as a (very physical) spectre to begin with, but "everyone noticed what an air of purpose there seemed to be about this person whose face was covered; she went forward very slowly, and seemed to crouch down a bit. It began to move towards Mr



Wilkes in very short but quick little jerks, the white bag bobbing on its face... and then it jumped". (Notice the effective switch of personal pronoun there.) Wilkes, I need hardly add, is not long for this world. Later in the story, the ghost reappears in a less frightening form.

In 1929, Father Ronald Knox insisted that: "All supernatural or preternatural agencies are ruled out as a matter of course" in crime and detective fiction. For a long time this was generally considered a good rule, but now we have the likes of Phil Rickman, John Connolly and even James Lee Burke combining

detective and supernatural fiction with considerable success. Perhaps John Dickson Carr was before his time.

Rosemary Pardoe
Hoole, Chester

I share Andrew May's love for the (often somewhat fortan) detective stories of John Dickson Carr, and was glad to read his take on the master. However, I must take issue with his blanket statement that "Carr's novels always end with a rational and down-to-earth explanation". He brings up the arguable case of *The Burning Court* only to assert that the epilogue (which, surely, is literally the point at which that novel "ends") and its supernatural re-evaluation of events merely shows that one of the characters had a misguided belief. As with Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, the case can be argued either way, but I think the supernatural final twist here is clearly aesthetically more powerful.

But even setting aside *The Burning Court*, it's not true that his novels are always ultimately "down-to-earth". Three of his historical detective stories involve time travel of one sort or another (*The Devil In Velvet* in 1951; *Fear Is The Same* in 1956; and *Fire, Burn!* in 1957), and the first of these also involves a literal deal with the literal Devil,

none of this being rationalised.

It may also be worth noting that Carr clearly had no great objection to supernatural fiction, having published several (non-mystery, non-series-character) short stories emphatically in that vein.

Dennis Lien
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Nature of proof

In his letter commenting on the work of Rupert Sheldrake, Steven Daly made some pertinent observations regarding scientific resistance to paradigm shifts [FT288:72–73], but his objection to a claim that the Big Bang is "just another theory" does not rest on the firmest of grounds. Even such a stalwart defender of the scientific faith as *New Scientist* expressed a different, if somewhat confused, opinion. Its editorial of 2 July 2005 addressed the conflicting views on this subject. After commenting on various research papers, some of which suggested that Einstein and other leading cosmologists were wrong, others saying that the Big Bang never happened, and others supporting the status quo, the editorial observed that the current model "contains a huge array of variables that can be changed pretty much at will. So flexible is it

that some claim the model can be stretched to fit any observation".

However, far from being alarmed that the data can be shifted to accommodate any coherent point of view, the editorial suggests that this lack of consistency only confirmed that "these are exciting times, bursting with ideas" and concludes with the claim that "cosmology has moved on from the realm of theological speculation... It has entered a golden age." Overlooking the fact that several centuries have past since "theological speculation" played any useful part in addressing the mathematical complexities of cosmology, and in referring to its irrelevance *New Scientist* was flogging a horse that went to the knacker's yard in Newton's day, we are left with the claim that the current level of cosmological confusion, far from being a worrying state of affairs, is actually evidence for yet another "golden age".

Daly claims that an emerging theory should have "a great deal of evidence to back it up", though can this be trusted to confirm a theory? Think of Ptolemy's geocentric world-view and his invention of epicycles to account for planetary retrogradation. He could make state-of-the-art predictions as to their positions, but his *theory* (the Greek root means 'view') was hopelessly wrong. The fact that an accurate prediction might be made does not *prove* the theory it claims to support, especially in the case of the Big Bang, where common data are being used to support variant conceptions. It should not be overlooked that the forms of mathematics used to address such quandaries also evolve (i.e., are invented), generally as a direct consequence of having to engage with the very mysteries they seek to unravel. Mathematics is not separate from everyday language; it is a variant form of it as, ultimately, everyday language has to be employed to explain the usage of all forms of calculus.

The malleability of language is reflected in the fact that there are problem-specific calculi, and this should further alert us to the problematics of 'proof', and what does, or does not, count as a valid argument. To suggest that

a claim for 'truth' must adhere to certain pre-existing criteria has to engage with the question as to whether or not the elected criteria can be regarded as valid and, if so, on what criteria do *they* rest, and in turn, what supports *those* criteria. As such a course of questioning is interminable, we have to draw a line. But we should not ignore the fact that this will tend to equate with what makes sense to us (as we clearly cannot make use of arguments that do not make sense to us) even if we might accept that what does not currently make sense to us might do so in the future. Think here of your time at school: it is unlikely that, when learning basic arithmetic, you could have grasped its algebraic equivalent. What makes sense to us is always on the move. Why should it stop short, and what might define that point?

This thought touches on an earlier letter by Martin Stubbs [FT284:69] regarding the assertion that "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence". But do they, and for what reason? For example, if I were to make the claim that I had taught a parrot to say "bananas", what proof would be required? Presumably to arrange a public demonstration in circumstances agreeable to sceptics. Would this be different if I claimed to have taught a *banana* to say "parrots"? While such a *claim* might be extraordinary, surely the requirements for proof should be the same: that the banana is made available for inspection and verification (that it is a real banana, and not some artful concoction) and that it is either heard to utter the word 'parrots' or is not. All too often 'skeptics' seem to employ the double standards implicit in the demand for extraordinary evidence in certain circumstances, which by definition are demands placed *a priori* to the phenomena, as Gordon Rutter discusses in the same issue with regard to 'Psychic Sally' [FT284:53], where evidence pro and con was assessed in differing ways, and suggests that 'hearsay' evidence, which is not permissible in Law, might be accepted by lesser judges.

Furthermore, if the parrot or the banana is heard by a multitude of scientists to speak *once*, is this sufficient evidence for

either of my claims? If not, then what of those who witnessed that awful moment on 16 July 1945 when the sky above Alamogordo lit up "brighter than a thousand suns"? Did they doubt what they had seen, or were Hiroshima and Nagasaki necessary replications to convince other scientists who believed that such a device was impossible? This raises questions such as (a) what constitutes proof, (b) how it should be demonstrated and, far more importantly, (c) how do we know that what we might claim to be proof is, in fact, proof at all?

This last question is brought into focus in the same edition where Lawrence R Samuel suggests [FT284:54-55] that our brains may be hard-wired to see the world in certain ways, as indeed Kant first proposed, albeit in a somewhat more elegant form of words. In his article, Samuel quotes Sharon Begley's claim that, as a consequence of this 'fact' of being hard-wired in a certain way, people are "effectively blinding themselves in situations where they do not really want to see something". Overlooking the significance of people "wanting" to see the world in a particular way, which suggest that *intention* is a necessary component of perception and thus might transcend genetic limitations, we still hear echoes of Richard Dawkins and Lewis Wolpert, in that those who see mystical significance in certain events do so because of inadequacies in their DNA, which omits the thought that those who *can't* see such possibilities might similarly be genetically blighted.

The issue of *intention* is central to an understanding of all theories. Whether or not Sheldrake can supply acceptable evidence for his views has to be seen both in the context of his goal and in light of what has been discussed above. He is clearly unhappy with current paradigms and thus starts from a very different place from more conventional approaches – but, like all scientists,

he has to start somewhere. That 'somewhere' will inevitably be located, one way or another, in some pre-existing concept. The idea that scientific research somehow exists in a pristine atmosphere devoid of all assumptions and prevailing social attitudes has been firmly knocked on the head by a whole raft of philosophers from Nietzsche and Wittgenstein to the present day. However, if one were to pursue the current scientific paradigm that claims our genes endow us with variant capacities to perceive 'reality', and its concomitant 'proof', then we would have to acknowledge that, while certain views might be more useful in specific circumstances, there could be no hope of ever achieving Stephen Hawking's goal of a Grand Unified Theory of Everything or, indeed, Anything. In which case, science would have achieved an own goal of such spectacular proportions as to deafen the Big Bang once and for all.

Mike Harding
London

Art, not nature

As I read Tim Weinberg's fascinating article, "The Specimens of Alex C.F." [FT283:48-50], a feeling of macabre *déjà vu* crept over me. I was reminded of a 1970s movie called *Tourist Trap* in which a demented Chuck Connors ran a roadside museum decorated with mannequins cast from his murdered guests. This is not to call Alex C.F. demented, but he does remind me of a closet PT Barnum who thrilled gullible guests to his museum with fakes like "The Feejee Mermaid." Whether fact or fiction, it's articles like this that feed my addiction to *Fortean Times*.

Greg May
Orlando, Florida



JOHN ROBERT DOCHERTY

it happened to me...

First-hand accounts from *FT* readers and browsers of www.forteantimes.com

The black shadow

It was around 1970 or 1971, and I was about 12–13 years old. Our family, in rural northwest Ohio, consisted of two parents and five boys (with me the third oldest), and had not long ago moved to a newly built house two lots down from our old one. Some construction details remained to be finished.

A few years earlier, as a smaller child, I had been terrified every night of monsters when going to bed, pulling the covers up over my head and trying not to move so they couldn't see me or tell I was there. It wasn't helped by the fact that, in the old house, the door to the attic was right at the foot of my top bunk bed. But by the time of this account, such childish fears had fled.

On this particular (school) night, I went to bed in my room, the last of two upstairs on the right side of the hallway. Drifting off to sleep with the door closed (others were still awake downstairs), I was awakened by a loud, normal-sounding knocking on the bedroom door, but no one was there.

Thinking I was mistaken, I went back to bed. This time, I wasn't even drifting off when the knocking came again, a very normal 'let-me-in-I-want-to-see-you' knock, maybe five raps. Again, no one was there. Having older brothers fond of playing jokes on younger siblings, I also checked the next couple of rooms, the closet, and under the bed, thinking maybe one of them was hiding and having a little fun at my expense. But no one was in evidence.

Well, by now, being suspicious of brothers' potential pranks, I walked downstairs and asked who wanted me. No one, brothers or parents, indicated they had come up to see me in my bedroom. Not satisfied with the answers, but getting no information, I shut my door and went back to bed, determined not to be caught 'sleeping' again.

I lay awake, waiting for the knock I was sure was coming (I didn't trust my older brothers as far as I could throw them). Sure enough, shortly the very normal-sounding knocking sounded clearly, and clearly it was coming from the door. But once more no



A small black thing was walking down the grass trail behind the trailers

one was there, and no one was nearby in a position to hide after knocking on the door.

Enough was enough. I left the door ajar, and lay awake, waiting to catch the dastardly brother so intent on spoiling my sleep. And very soon after that, the knocking sounded again. Except this time, awake, I could clearly see a black shape or shadow hitting itself against the door's hallway side. It wasn't recognisable as anything – not an animal, not an object – just a velvety black shape. The knocking stopped, and it was gone. It hadn't gone 'away' in any direction – it was just gone.

I might not have been scared of monsters anymore, but I was

a little 'tweaked' by what I saw. I checked around for a bird, an animal, a bat – anything that could have gotten in the house and banged against my door. I didn't find anything that night, or the next day, and neither did anyone else. It sure wasn't my brothers or my parents. I spent more than a few uneasy nights in the room until the immediacy of the experience faded. The incident never repeated itself.

T Miller

By email

Witnessed in error

In 1985, my family moved to Watertown, South Dakota, a small town 16 miles (26km) away from the Sisseton Reservation. We were tired of living in a cold house in winter, of hauling water or melting snow to cook or wash with. We moved into a small trailer court that had six or seven trailers side by side on the west end of town, only a block or two from the Big Sioux River, which runs through town.

As a Sioux family of four, we were aware of the spiritual side of our Indian heritage. In our culture,

people sometimes speak of spirits, which are called *Wanagis*. In the stories, some of these spirits are good; some are very bad. Some of the spirits are visible, like the pale ghosts in most ghost stories. But some of the spirits are not meant to be seen. They hide themselves from the living.

I still get chills when I think about what I saw one evening in that trailer court. The memory haunts my dreams. What I saw was not meant to be seen. I think the spirit forgot to hide itself from me.

It happened during early evening, the time before dusk when shadows start to darken before nightfall. I remember that the sky was beautiful – afire in red, orange, and yellow. It was a spectacular sunset. I was just getting ready to go cruising with my older brother and two friends. We were all past 18 at the time. My old Chevy was parked behind the trailer house. We had just finished tuning it, replacing the spark plugs, the distributor cap, the points and rotor, the wires, and so forth.

Two trailers down from ours, two women and a man were arguing in front of their trailer. They were so loud that we could hear everything they said. I reached down by my front tyre to grab a ratchet from the toolbox, and I caught a movement out of the corner of my eye. What I saw startled me.

I froze. I can't exactly describe what I saw. A small black thing was walking down the grass trail behind the trailers. That's the best way I can explain it. It was maybe 3ft (90cm) tall with skinny legs and arms. It had a faceless head, and it walked like a human. But it didn't look like a ghost or anything. It was black, as if there were a hole in the air, as if it were a nothingness swallowing light. I've never seen such complete blackness since.

I don't think it noticed me. I watched in astonishment as it walked up to a tree about as big around as a coffee can and put its arm around the trunk and stood there, watching the people who were arguing. I couldn't believe my eyes. The thing was so black that it looked as if the tree had a black hole in it. It seemed to be enjoying itself.

Maybe it liked anger; maybe it brought anger.

All this happened in a couple

minutes. One of the other guys said something to me, and I snapped out of my trance.

"What the hell is that?" I asked quietly, pointing at the thing, still standing behind the tree.

Then I threw the ratchet at it, and the thing jumped and spun its head around. I had surprised it. I don't think I was supposed to see it. I think it forgot to hide itself. We ran into the trailer and never saw it again, except, like I said, in my dreams.

Some of the people I've told the story to say it was a water spirit; some say it was a bad spirit, an evil one. Maybe it was what Lewis and Clark referred to as "black devils". I don't know what it was.

Maybe it's best I never know.

Robert L Owens

Sioux Falls, South Dakota

(As told to John Smelcer, scholar of Native American studies)

Norwich frog rain

A viewer told Anglia Television News on 22 March 2012 that she had been hit on the head by a frog while walking along Prince of Wales Road in Norwich, and that several more landed on the ground nearby. I work in an office building on Prince of Wales Road. It is quite close to the river, but other buildings, including a hotel and the local tax office, are closer to the water. On 22 March, I was in a meeting in another building all morning, so didn't arrive at work until about 1:45pm, but when I did there were five dead frogs lying on the small paved area in front of the building, within an area of about two square metres. They were stretched out straight, except for one which had one leg straight down and one at right angles to the other, like a ballet dancer. I think all but one were on their backs. The following day they were gone.

Helen Allen

By email

Beetle trek

Over 30 years ago – when I was about 10 years old – my friend and I were out walking in the countryside around our home village of Billingshurst in West Sussex. After several hours, we found ourselves on a main road leading back into the village. To our astonishment, we found a long procession of Devil's coachhorse beetles (*Ocytus olens*) making



We found a long procession of beetles heading into the village

their way into the village in the lea formed from the corner of the pavement as it touched the road. We spent ages counting them as we travelled home. In my memory they numbered in the hundreds, but this was 30 years ago and I was only 10.

The Devil's coachhorse (above) is an aptly named insect as it is totally black with a scorpion-like tail, which it raises over its back as a sort of bluff. It has two large black fangs that lend its eyes a sinister gaze. Many years later, I emailed an entomologist and asked him how this could have happened. (Beetles are not social creatures, and in the case of the Devil's coachhorse you would be lucky to find more than one under the same rock, never mind 100 or more acting as one.) The expert said he didn't know but suggested that sometimes insects that normally aren't social may group together if they have trouble living in their environment. An unexpected problem, maybe chemical dumping, creates an exodus. This doesn't explain why we found only the Devil's coachhorse that day, or why there were so many.

Simon van Someren

By email

Giant hare

The letter about an enormous hare [FT278:76] reminds me of an experience nearly three decades ago in my mother's garden. I was

in my 30s. Walking through a gateway, I nearly collided with a giant hare. On his hind legs, with ears up he (I presume it was a he) was over 4ft (1.2m) tall. We stood looking at each other for ages – or so it seemed, but was more likely a minute or two. I was a little in shock, but the hare was very calm and seemed almost quizzical in attitude. Then the dog saw him and charged. The hare showed no sign of fear, regarding the dog with something like contempt, and just bounded away with huge leaps. In a few seconds he was past me, out the gate, across the drive, through the fence and had vanished across the field – before the dog had even got across the drive. The hare was alone, and I have no idea what he was doing in the kitchen garden. I never saw him again.

Andrew Munro

Co Cork, Ireland

Telephone riddle

One Saturday in the late 1980s, when I lived on Merseyside with my family, I answered the phone to be asked the question: "And is there any water in the desert?" The voice was female and

middle-class, and my first thought was that it was my aunt playing some sort of trick on me. After a few "Hello"s on my part, I waited for a minute or two but heard nothing at the other end and certainly not the receiver being put down. I hung up and rang my aunt, who hadn't been anywhere near the phone. I've never come across the phrase again, and Googling it simply brings up a collection of articles about desert survival.

Ian Cragg

Otley, West Yorkshire

Humming sofa

I turned on a friend's microwave oven and the digital readout flickered for a moment and then the word 'child' appeared on it. I turned it off and on again and then it worked correctly. In that same house, I experienced a sofa moving against my back, as if taking the weight of someone else sitting on it. The same sofa hums late at night – a toneless tune with variations that seem never to repeat themselves.

Tam Jones

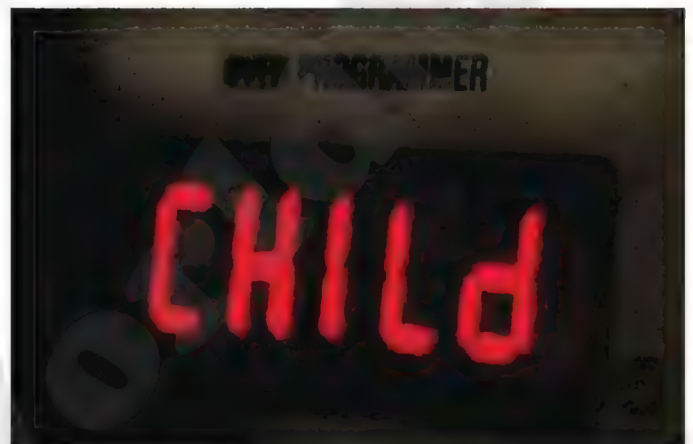
Montreal, Canada

Ball lightning

One stormy afternoon in the late 1980s, I was watching TV in the living room and doing some ironing when a loud bang and flash came from the TV. A blue ball of something that seemed to be like plasma floated out of the TV screen (which had gone off) and travelled approximately 3ft (90cm) across the room until it hit the hot plate of the iron. A loud bang came from the iron and the blue ball disappeared. Neither the TV nor the iron had any marks on them, but neither worked again.

Angie Mcquade

By email



LETTER FROM CAMBODIA



honour both Shiva and Buddha, a syncretism that translated into widespread religious tolerance: court Brahmins and Buddhist monks lived alongside one another in the city.

Local spirits, or *neak ta*, (see FT289:74-75) were also worshipped. As their temples were built out of perishable materials, we know little about them, but when in 802 Jayavarman II first united Cambodia's many chiefdoms and declared himself "emperor of the world", he promoted a local god to emperor of the *neak ta* – his divine counterpart in the realm of the spirits.

These Indian gods came with a richly imagined Cosmos, and the Angkor temples were that Cosmos in microcosm. At the centre was the shrine, atop a hill or pyramid – Mount Meru, *axis mundi*, home of the gods. Around this ran a wall, representing the mountains at the rim of the world, and beyond that a moat or a *baray*, the cosmic ocean. The priest-architects believed that if they made their monument as much like the gods' home as possible, then the gods would live in it.

To get to this god world, you had to cross a bridge between realms. At Angkor, these bridges often had balustrades carved as *naga* – multi-headed snake deities associated with water and fecundity (see FT166:30-35). These bridges may represent rainbows, linking earth and sky. Once over the moat, the dimensions of time and space alter. To give the impression of the infinity of this divine realm, the architects exaggerated perspective or made the temples deliberately disorientating.

The temples were square, designed around axes running toward the four cardinal points, and built from the god in his shrine – the origin of time and space – outward. He radiated power out along the axes into the kingdom, up through the central tower into heaven, and down through the temple's reflection into the underworld.

By building himself this temple-mountain, the king identified himself with the gods. It legitimised his rule, and was the centre of his kingdom and universe. Rain fell on its summit and ran down into the moat and out into the fields, fertilising the kingdom, one of his chief responsibilities. On death, he rejoined the gods above. It was a system that worked equally well whether the king and gods at its centre were Hindu or Buddhist.

COSMOLOGY AND NUMEROLOGY

As the Sun rises, it strikes Angkor's stone warriors, grotesque beasts, heroes, villains and miscellaneous deities. Elephants on the lower terraces carry the world on their backs. The half-man, half-bird *garuda*, cosmic enemy of the *naga*, takes off with

2. Angkor Wat: Home of the Gods

FT's errant web mistress JEN OGILVIE files another report from Cambodia.

The Angkor Wat causeway is not built on a human scale. Stand at its end at dawn, as the Sun rises from the jungle and the three craggy lotus bud towers materialise, and you find you're on a bridge between worlds: on the other side lies the home of the gods.

Even once the early morning mists have cleared from the temple's scaffold underpinning and the cameras' stare has scared away any lingering shades of divinity, Angkor Wat – built by Suryavarman II (AD 1113-50) – is an extraordinary sight, and the Khmer are fiercely proud of it. In March, an Indian temple trust announced plans to build a replica in Bihar. This did not go down well. The online comments section of the *Phnom Penh Post*, normally so empty it has digital tumbleweed, spluttered into life. Most posters were particularly wounded by the revelation that the "fake" temple would be bigger than theirs.

Angkor Wat is generally considered the largest religious monument in the world. It might not have the soaring vaults of the great European cathedrals, but its causeway is massive and its terraces, galleries and corridors unfold away from you in ever-expanding squares. Around it stretch the remains of the rest of the vast hydraulic city of Angkor. Here, Khmer kings from the 9th to 13th centuries built their temples and ruled over an empire that once covered much of Southeast Asia.

This empire has all but vanished from history. There are no written records, except for temple inscriptions and the account of a visiting Chinese diplomat; of the city's many buildings only the temples remain. Today, you can wander down a track to a romantically ruined temple, where walls and carvings are slowly dragged down into the earth by krakenesque tree roots, to contemplate the mysteries of a lost civilisation.

OF GODS AND KINGS

There are hundreds of temples at Angkor, and they served many purposes: homes for the gods, symbols of the correct ordering of society and the Cosmos, calendrical observatories and monuments to their founders' power.

Each king was associated with a particular god, who was housed in the central shrine of his state temple. This might be Shiva, in the form of a *linga* (*lingam*), or, less commonly, Vishnu or Harihara. These gods were treated as royalty. Every morning they'd be woken up, dressed, washed and fed. Once a year they threw a feast, to which gods from neighbouring temples were invited.

They were surrounded by a pantheon of lesser deities, drawn from a number of cults. An inscription might

BELOW: Angkor Wat's monumental causeway, a bridge between worlds.





BOTH PHOTOS: JEN OGILVIE

Vishnu on his shoulders. Lions stand guard at stairways. Bare-breasted divine beauties, the *apsara* and *devata*, dance over the walls. *Devas* (gods) and *asuras* (demons) fight eternal battles. The *kala*, a fierce foliage-devouring head, grins from lintels.

Bas-reliefs show victories, or tell stories from Hindu mythology and the *Reamker*, a Khmer version of India's *Ramayana*, in which Prince Ream (Rama) rescues Sita from a demon king with the help of an army of monkeys. The vast panels stretched round Angkor Wat's central temple are particularly spectacular, especially the sinners being tortured horribly in 32 different hells.

To those who knew how, the whole temple was readable. Some of the carvings have clear practical functions: vines and flames round doorways, for instance, cleanse you as you cross the gods' threshold. But more than that, it seems that the stone creatures and scenes had a magical, animating function, transforming the earthly temple into a celestial building, a fitting home for the gods.

Angkor Wat's repetitive, invocatory Churning of the Sea of Milk is an example of the power of a bas-relief. *Devas* and *asuras* have looped a *naga* round a mountain and are pulling it to rotate the mountain and churn the sea of milk, producing an elixir of immortality (this scene is repeated on the bridges to Angkor Thom, with the moat as ocean and Bayon as pivot). The *devas* win: by displaying this myth, a king could ensure victory over his enemies. He could also launch a reign that would bring prosperity to the Universe: following the *devas*' victory, Indra was crowned king of the gods.

In *Heaven's Mirror*, Graham Hancock, hoping to fit Angkor into the pantheonist theory of a lost ancient civilisation, argues that the temples were deliberately built in the shape of

Angkor Wat is the largest religious monument in the world

ABOVE: Angkor Wat, reaching up into the skies and down into the underworld.

BELOW: Gigantic, mysterious faces at the Bayon.



the constellation Draco in 10,500 BC. Most people think Hancock is wrong – and yet the monuments, and Angkor Wat in particular, are encoded with deep numerological and cosmological meaning.

In the 1970s, researchers discovered that significant distances on the east-west axis as you enter Angkor Wat correspond to the four ages, or *yugas*, of Indian thought, and that as you move forward through the temple you leave the decadent Kali Yuga, in which we live now, behind on the bridge, and approach a purer golden age, the Krita Yuga. An inscription tells us that Suryavarman II had “manifested the *krita yuga* and thrown away the evils of the *kali yuga*”; the king used architecture to change time itself. The researchers also found that if you stand by the western entrance at the Spring Equinox the Sun rises directly over the central tower, while at the Summer Solstice it rises over a nearby hill and at the Winter Solstice over temple Prasat Kuk Bangro. They concluded that Angkor Wat faces west not because it's a funerary monument, but because it's a solar calendar.

Angkor scholar Eleanor Mannikka has since argued that “all of the chambers, axes, and galleries of Angkor Wat [had] measurements that were cosmologically or calendrically significant.” For example, the Churning of the Sea of Milk relief counts the number of days between the solstices; the mandala used to build Angkor Wat arranged its 32 gods to match the constellations and directions of the northern night sky; lunar time can be measured round the circumferences of the temple and solar time up its axes. Angkor Wat's priest-architects followed Indian ideals of sacred architecture and were highly skilled in astronomy. By linking Suryavarman with the Sun and Vishnu they empowered his divine kingship.



Another astonishing structure is to be found to the north of Angkor Wat, where you emerge from the forest to confront a mountain of giant stone faces. The Bayon was the state temple of the Mahayana Buddhist king Jayavarman VII, built in the late 12th or early 13th century. It was dedicated to Buddha, but around his central statue were assorted Vaishnavite, Shaivite and ancestor deities. No one knows who or what the faces represent: they could be the bodhisattva of compassion, Lokeshvara; guardians of the Buddha and his teachings; officials overseeing the kingdom; the king himself. Their expressions change as the light shifts over them, but they are always perfectly inscrutable.

DECLINE & FALL

One of the great mysteries of Angkor is its abandonment. The building of stone monuments stopped soon after the death of Jayavarman VII in the early 13th century, and eventually the Khmer capital moved south. There are a number of possible reasons for this, but current thinking is that the underlying cause of Angkor's collapse was over-exploitation of its landscape. Recent work by the Greater Angkor Project (GAP) suggests that at its peak the settlement covered over 1,000 square

kilometres (390 sq miles), making it "the largest low-density pre-industrial city on Earth". Sustaining a settlement of this size required Angkor to become a "hydraulic city": the "cosmic oceans" doubled as reservoirs, mitigating flooding during monsoons and storing water for dry season; canals and embankments kept rice paddies irrigated.

But clearing great swathes of forest led to topsoil degradation and erosion and possibly the silting up of waterways. There were engineering flaws: the Eastern Baray, for example, was no deeper than the river that fed it, and there were no large-scale dams. It's even possible that geological uplift caused river levels to drop, emptying the system of water. And yet Angkor sprawled ever outward, extending and patching up its faulty plumbing.

When unusual weather came along, this over-stretched network couldn't cope. A study of tree rings shows that the area suffered two severe droughts, from the 1330s to the 1360s and from the 1400s to 1420s, interspersed with intense rainy seasons that may have damaged the hydraulic system. The result would have been worse flooding, less rice, and disease; a weak kingdom ruled by a king who had lost the support of the gods.

ABOVE: The Bayon, symbolic centre of Jayavarman VII's empire.

It's been centuries since water last flowed through the arteries of Angkor. In the dry season, everything is parched – lichen-crusted elephant trunks dangle in dry moats, temple reflections squeeze into puddles. The gods who once stalked the corridors are long gone.

That's not to say Angkor is utterly disenchanted – but while they'll pay their respects, most Khmer come here to sightsee and picnic. Sun, 24, an Angkor Wat guide, estimates only five per cent of Khmer visit the temple for religious reasons. Siem Reap guesthouse manager, Terang, 30, is blunter: "I think the tourists spoil that."

Curious as to whether gods can survive *Tomb Raider* cocktails, Placebo concerts, and Japanese girls staging impromptu fashion shoots, I ask around at Wat Damnak, a local pagoda. Cheavannanda, 24, has been a monk for 14 years. For some locals, he says, the temples still have spiritual power. But their real importance is that they attract religious pilgrims from abroad – Thailand and Laos mostly, but "All the foreigners who believe in spiritual power, they come to Angkor Wat."

The first French visitors refused to believe that the "backward", "docile" Khmer could have built Angkor. Villagers living near the old temples, meanwhile, thought that they had built themselves, or were the work of gods, genies or giants. Now, with archaeologists and tourists queuing up to visit, and puffed up by the rhetoric of their political leaders, the Khmer have adopted Angkor – or, more specifically, Angkor Wat – as the symbol of Khmer identity. Previously, Angkor Wat's magnificence joined it to the gods; now, it proves the strength of the Khmer race.

That's why the Khmer are so upset by an Indian copy of Angkor Wat. Terang tries to explain: "We want that one is just one – just one we want in the world, you know? We don't want to have two. It's special for us." And as the setting Sun gilds the moat, and all over Angkor its warm glow breathes memory into stone chimeras, you have to agree: somehow, this place is special. **FT**

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JEN OGILVIE used to work for *FT*, but ran away to Cambodia to work as a freelance journalist. For updates on how this experiment is progressing, head over to www.jenogi.com.

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ABOVE: The hunt for the Hackney Ghost, from the *Illustrated Police News*, 31 August 1895. BELOW: On 26 August, another newspaper had carried an illustration by artist Sydney Higham showing "The Hunt for the Hackney Ghost: Midnight scene in St John's Churchyard".

14. THE HACKNEY GHOST

In the summer of 1895, there were rumours of some very queer goings-on in the churchyard of St John's, Hackney. A figure dressed in white had been seen in the churchyard by at least a dozen witnesses; more than once, it had caused women to faint, by the simple expedient of sneaking up to them and uttering that outcry thought to be favoured by the spirit world – "Boo!"

There was a quaint gravestone in the churchyard, depicting three boys playing cards at a table. It was rumoured that one of these boys, who had been losing heavily, had exclaimed "May God strike me dead if I do not win this game!" He lost, stood up to leave the table, and dropped dead! Had he returned as the Hackney Ghost?

In August 1895, many local inhabitants were too fearful to venture anywhere near the churchyard at night. But the gangs of young Hackney roughs were not so easily scared: they suspected that some prankster was amusing himself by frightening the local women. They armed themselves with sticks and bludgeons, brought with them lanterns and candles, and marched to the churchyard to lay the ghost. The word went around the neighbourhood and a veritable panic resulted: more than 6,000 people invaded the Hackney churchyard, looking for the ghost.

The mob climbed the railings, clambering over graves and gravestones to reach the rear of the church, where the ghost was believed to manifest. They waited until midnight, but no ghost turned up. Some jokers instead began to improvise: by giving "unearthly cries" they caused part of the mob to stampede, and some sheets of newspaper dropped

down from the branches of a tree had a similar effect. According to *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* of 25 August, several people were injured during these stampedes, and the damage done to the graves was very great. After a number of people had their pockets picked, some police officers arrived, but they were powerless against the frenzied mob. Reinforcements were called for, but not even

a force of 50 constables was capable of restoring order.

The next evening, the churchyard was again under siege from intrepid ghost hunters, but the combined effect of a thunderstorm and the presence of 40 constables kept them quiet.

The Hackney Ghost was never seen or heard of again.



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Why Fortean?



Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature

of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

FT toes no party line.

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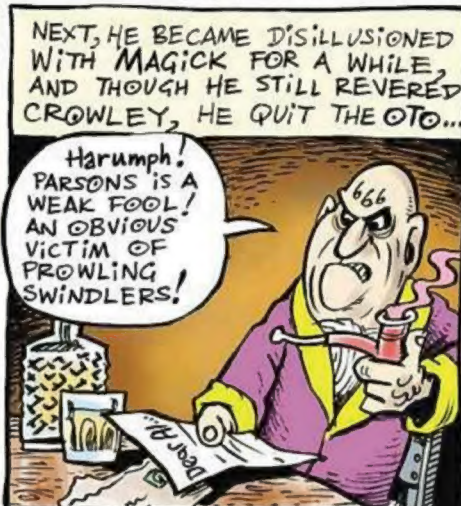
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ON SALE 16 AUGUST



HUGO PIETTE

TALES FROM THE VAULT

EACH MONTH WE SEND *FORTEAN TIMES* FOUNDER BOB RICKARD DOWN INTO THE DARKEST, COBWEB-RIDDEN DEPTHS OF THE VAULTS OF FORTEAN TOWERS IN SEARCH OF STORIES FROM *FT*'S PAST.

AUGUST 1982

More ostension: this time a South African version of *The Return of Martin Guerre*. It began in January 1982 with an accident on the Golden Highway, near Senaoane, in which Abednego Machoba was killed. At least, that was what Mrs Machoba was told. She and his two brothers identified his body and buried him soon after. This month, seven months after the family burial, Abednego walked back into their lives. His frightened children locked themselves in their bedroom and his wife would not let him touch her. Hospital records showed his admittance to one hospital and transfer to another, where he remained until August. A scar on his head were from a fall in the second hospital. Mrs Machoba was adamant that she had buried her husband and that his 'risen' body was being animated by a stranger's soul. "He is so different from my husband, although the features [including the head scar] are the same," she told the *Sowetan*. Abednego's family refused to sleep in the same house as a 'dead' man. **FT44:40**

This month saw a surprising number of Christian fundamentalist groups clambering up Mount Ararat in search of a large boat made of gopher wood which was said to have been stranded up there for more than 4,000 years. On the 22nd, two separate teams – led by Marvin Steffens and Ron Wyatt – inspired by Apollo 15 astronaut James Irwin's belief that the boat-shaped rock simulacrum (famously photographed in 1959) might be the Biblical Ark, made off with samples of clay, wood and stones from the site. On the 25th, Steffens held a press conference in Ankara, but fled before Turkish officials could seize his booty. Two days later, Wyatt turned up in New York, announcing that Galbraith Labs in Knoxville would analyse his samples. Steffens was not so lucky; that same day he and his family were detained at Istanbul airport and his unauthorised loot impounded. The Turkish culture minister announced that the sample "were of no historical value"... which raises the question of why they were reclaimed. **FT44:15**

AUGUST 1992

This month, a Chinese paper reported the death of a 22-year-old man called Wei, who was convinced he had mastered the mystical art of *qi gong*. To demonstrate his control of internal *qi* (chi) energy to

his mother, he tried to stop an oncoming train just outside Shanghai. It was no contest; he was promptly killed. His family said they thought he had made an idle boast and that he would not actually stand on the tracks. Something very similar happened nearly three years earlier, in Russia, near Astrakhan, south-east of Moscow. A man was seen walking along the tracks before stepping into the path of a freight train and bracing himself for impact. This was no accident; he was identified as E Frenkel, a well-known psychic healer. Notes found in his briefcase – which he'd dropped before taking his stance – boasted of escalating abilities, stopping bicycles, cars and streetcars. "Now, I am going to stop a train," he declared. He believed the mortal danger would trigger the release of great psychological power. **FT53:22, 56:18, 66:15**

AUGUST 2002

As the 'Monkey Man' panic continued to spread in India this month, other oddities sprouted across Asia, heralded by a half-hour rain, mysteriously coloured red, in Vietnam's Nghe An province, followed by an unusually large whirlwind on the coast. While Vietnamese scientists scratched their heads over the sinister-looking rain, several thousand people decided to empty and clean out their water tanks in case they were contaminated. **FT165:8**

In Southwest Nepal, 200 naked women took to their fields at midnight and began ploughing; an ancient ritual to end a drought that, apparently, appeases Indra as the Hindu god responsible for rain. The men of their villages were shut inside their homes and the windows barred. A similar ritual was played out in Uttar Pradesh and other Indian states. Indra approved and a monsoon blew in "soon after". Curiously, a nude jogger in faraway New Jersey was arrested after running across a bridge. He said he did it to end the state's drought. **FT165:8**

India's famous non-corroding cast iron pillar – erected at a temple to Vishnu in Udayagiri around AD 400, but moved to Delhi in the 13th century – was finally explained. It has double the usual amount of phosphorus in the pig iron, allowing a thin layer of *misawite* (iron hydrogen phosphate hydrate) to accumulate. After 1,600 years, the layer is one-twentieth of a millimetre thick but enough to prevent the iron reacting with oxygen to form rust. **FT165:24**

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